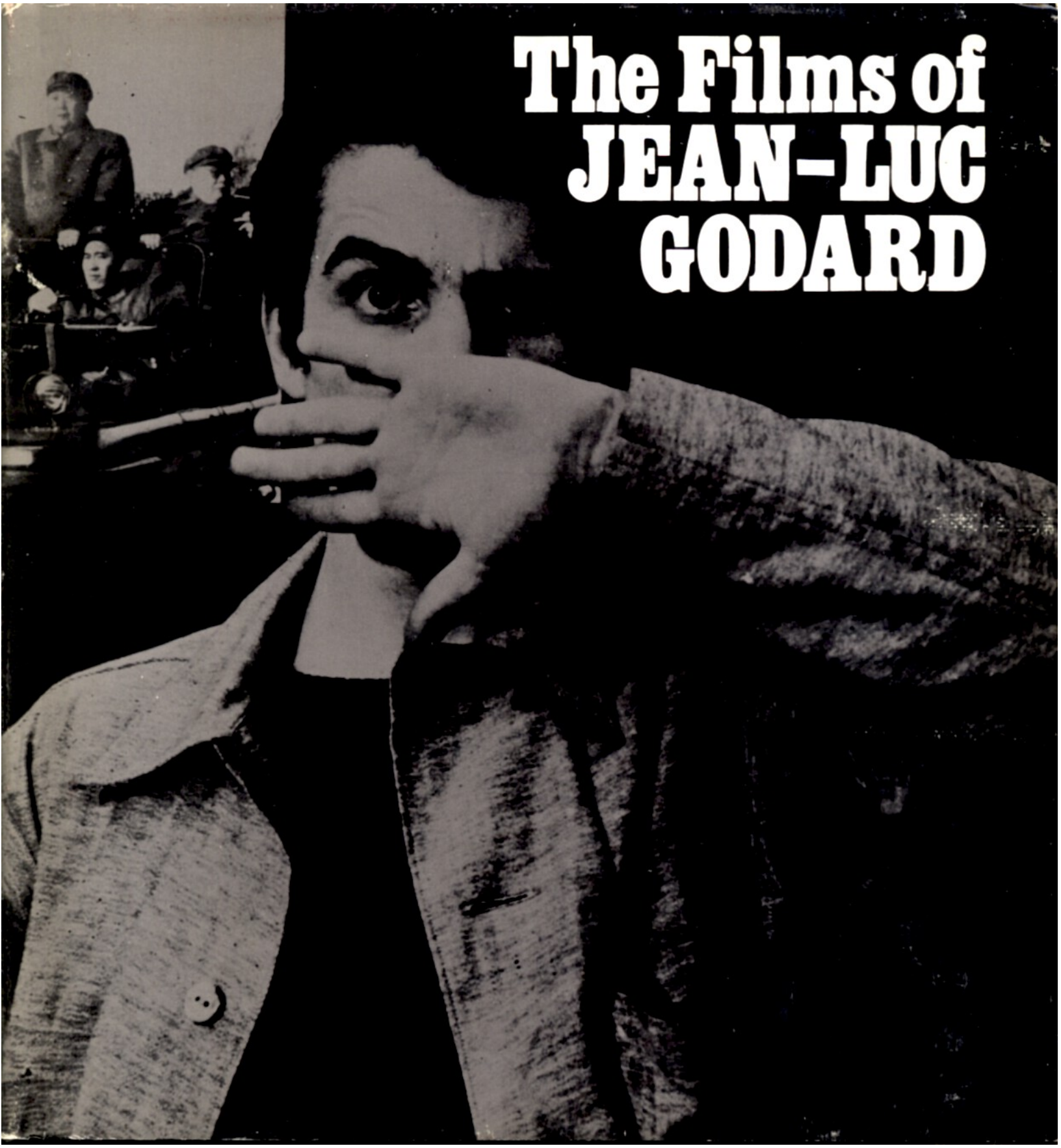
The Films of JEAN-LUC GODARD



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THE FILMS OF JEAN-LUC GODARD

series edited and designed by Ian Cameron

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THE FILMS OF JEAN-LUC GODARD

Charles Barr
Stig Björkman
Jacques Bontemps
Barry Boys
Ian Cameron
Jean-Louis Comolli
Edgardo Cozarinsky
Raymond Durgnat
Philip French
Jose Luis Guarner
Jim Hillier
Paul Mayersberg
V.F. Perkins
Michael Walker
Richard Winkler
Robin Wood

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BOOKS THAT MATTER

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INTRODUCTION

Ian Cameron

If violence ever breaks out in the normally peaceable ranks of film critics, it will almost certainly be provoked by the work of Jean-Luc Godard. Although critics have their little differences over almost everyone, no director has in recent years managed to break down the critical consensus to the same extent as Godard. His work elicits extreme reactions: goofy adulation in some quarters, and elsewhere equally unreasoned hate. This book is intended to open up the area between the extremes by presenting a range of reasoned opinions on his films.

Whatever one may think of Godard's ability as a director, it is difficult to deny his intelligence. It doesn't of course follow that a man with Godard's intellect just has to be a good film-maker, but the breadth of his intellectual coverage is so manifest in his output that it has affected reactions to his films. Godard's work exhibits his egg-headedness to the point where it has got people scared. Given the dismaying prospect of having to produce instant copy on any Godard movie after a single viewing, it is only natural that most published comments will be marked by their authors' reactions to stress: some cowed into adulation, others roused to hostility. A side effect of the violence of critical reactions is that Godard has become since *Une Femme Mariée* controversial and then very quickly, if perhaps temporarily, fashionable.

Thanks to fashion and low budgets, Godard has lately been able to keep as busy as he likes, and that is pretty busy. He has averaged around two features per year plus short episodes, most of which seem to be in the money for jam category. Godard's services have been much in demand among producers of episode movies, combining box office power, intellectual cachet and value for money.

The relationship between style and budget in Godard movies is not a subject that is generally discussed. When his films started to do well at the box office, it became obvious that he actually likes working on a small budget as he has avoided the budgetary escalation that one expects from successful directors. Even *Le Mepris* was in its way a low budget movie—I believe Godard made some comment that Joe Levine was getting a two million dollar movie for a million dollars. In many ways, Godard's choice of budget is admirably pragmatic: it recognises that he makes minority films with consequently limited box office potential and it allows him freedom from the artistic constraints that come with higher budgets. On the other hand, one may note a great predilection in Godard movies for the sort of scene that can be shot very cheaply, particularly the spontaneous interview which can be done in a single long take and the hand-held camera whoop-up in the streets where the extras are free and the sound can be post-synchronised. One might wonder how far the development of Godard's style is a response to the limitations of his budgets.

Godard has developed considerably in the ten years and sixteen films since *A Bout de Souffle*. In fact, seeing this first film again today, one is surprised to find how conventional it seems, particularly in the light of Godard's

later work. With *A Bout de Souffle*, it seemed that the *nouvelle vague* had gone just about as far as it could go with the hand-held, jump-cut, elliptical style. It seemed to mark the complete rejection of the old grammar of film, with its conventions of editing. Not that this was entirely new: there had been various isolated demonstrations, mainly (like Hitchcock's *Rope*) unheeded, that editing was not an inherent part of the Art of Film. But Godard and Jacques Rozier went further than any of their contemporaries in the realisation that if editing was not an essential part of the 'language' of film but just an optional extra, they could use it just when and how they liked. A trailer of things to come was provided in 1958 by Rozier's short *Blue Jeans* which made striking use of jump cuts not just between but within scenes. *A Bout de Souffle* shares with *Blue Jeans* and Rozier's feature, *Adieu Philippine*, some of the rhythmic, visual music appeal that they gain from their cutting. But Godard's assembly of *A Bout de Souffle* was not, like some of Rozier's set pieces, designed to produce a formal pattern but to eliminate the pieces of film which Godard did not like. Already in *A Bout de Souffle* he was making a film as an assemblage of fragments, in this case composed of footage which he thought was good, arranged in a simple narrative order. In his later films, the fragments are very much more disparate in nature, making the assemblage method more apparent, and the order of the fragments often becomes quite complex. As the fragmentation has increased, Godard has tended to underline it with such devices as the chapter headings of *Vivre sa Vie* and the numbered sections (15 precise facts) of *Masculin-Féminin*, where Godard misses

Still: A Bout de Souffle—*Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and Patricia (Jean Seberg).*

Still: A Bout de Souffle—*Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and Patricia (Jean Seberg).*

out some numbers and plays games with others, as if to show that he is abandoning aspirations of tidiness and coherence. It has sometimes seemed that Godard is at his best when his films are least coherent and least circumscribed, when they appear to be reaching out through references and allusions in all directions to take in vast areas of modern life.

A notice on a wall in *La Chinoise* states: '*Il faut confronter les idées vagues avec des images claires.*' In images often of dazzling clarity, Godard has reflected the ideological confusions of the world today. The only unity which he imposes on his observations is that which comes from his own individuality as an observer. Increasingly, his films have been shaped by his own uncertainties.

In Godard's development, the old, swinging style of *A Bout de Souffle*, which had commentators reaching for phrases about exuberance and youth breaking through, did not last very long. It made its last appearance in *Une Femme est une Femme.* By that time everybody was doing it: directors like René Clément and Henri Verneuil had felt sufficiently threatened by the new boys that both had turned out synthetic *nouvelle vague* movies. For Godard, it had served its purpose. The methods of the New Wave were particularly suited to young and inexperienced directors who were free from the time-is-money pressures of studio shooting and from the problems of directing actors in an already finalised script. Similarly, the darting, elliptical style perfected by Godard side-stepped many of the difficulties facing a new director, problems of portraying and handling emotions on the screen. As the camera went hopping, skipping and jumping around Paris, the emotional side of the film was largely a do-it-yourself effort on the part of the audience. The sadness-behind-the-gaiety approach of *Une Femme est une Femme* equally avoided any direct confrontation with the emotions—indeed this is largely the point of the little game where Karina and Brialy converse by showing each other book covers.

In his later films, Godard moves towards the direct statement of emotions, and here the operative word is statement. Godard barely portrays emotions; in this sense, there is very little call for acting in his movies. Instead, the characters describe their emotions. Although Godard often uses images brilliantly,

he also mistrusts them, particularly when they present facial expressions to be interpreted. So emotions are described in words rather than shown in images.

Here Godard is overthrowing another of the standard attitudes to the cinema: that it is *primarily* a visual medium. Any standard work on the cinema is likely to tell you that many words are bad words and that wordy films are either 'theatrical' or 'literary'. I suppose that Godard might be placed in the latter category. Often the word leads the image and the continuity of his films is verbal rather than visual. The influence of Robert Bresson has become increasingly important, both in the use of words and the handling of actors. Very often, too, the duration of a shot or scene is determined entirely by the words and a single quite simple image is held on the screen. Godard feels no compulsion to maintain what used to be called the visual interest.

Godard's ability with words is almost unique among film directors (see for example the quote at the end of Stig Björkman's article on *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle.*) It has been suggested that Godard sometimes uses words just for their own sake. One might quote Novalis, who must be counted as one of the major influences on Godard: 'It is when a man talks simply for the sake of talking that he pronounces the most beautiful and original truths.' People are also infuriated by Godard's word games: in *Le Petit Soldat*, Bruno Forestier asks himself: 'was I happy because I felt free or free because I felt happy?' And one of the leading characters in *Bande à Part* wonders if 'the world is in the course of becoming a dream or a dream of becoming the world'. Again one can quote Novalis: 'True dialogue is only a play on words.' Which may not be a justification, but is at least an antecedent.

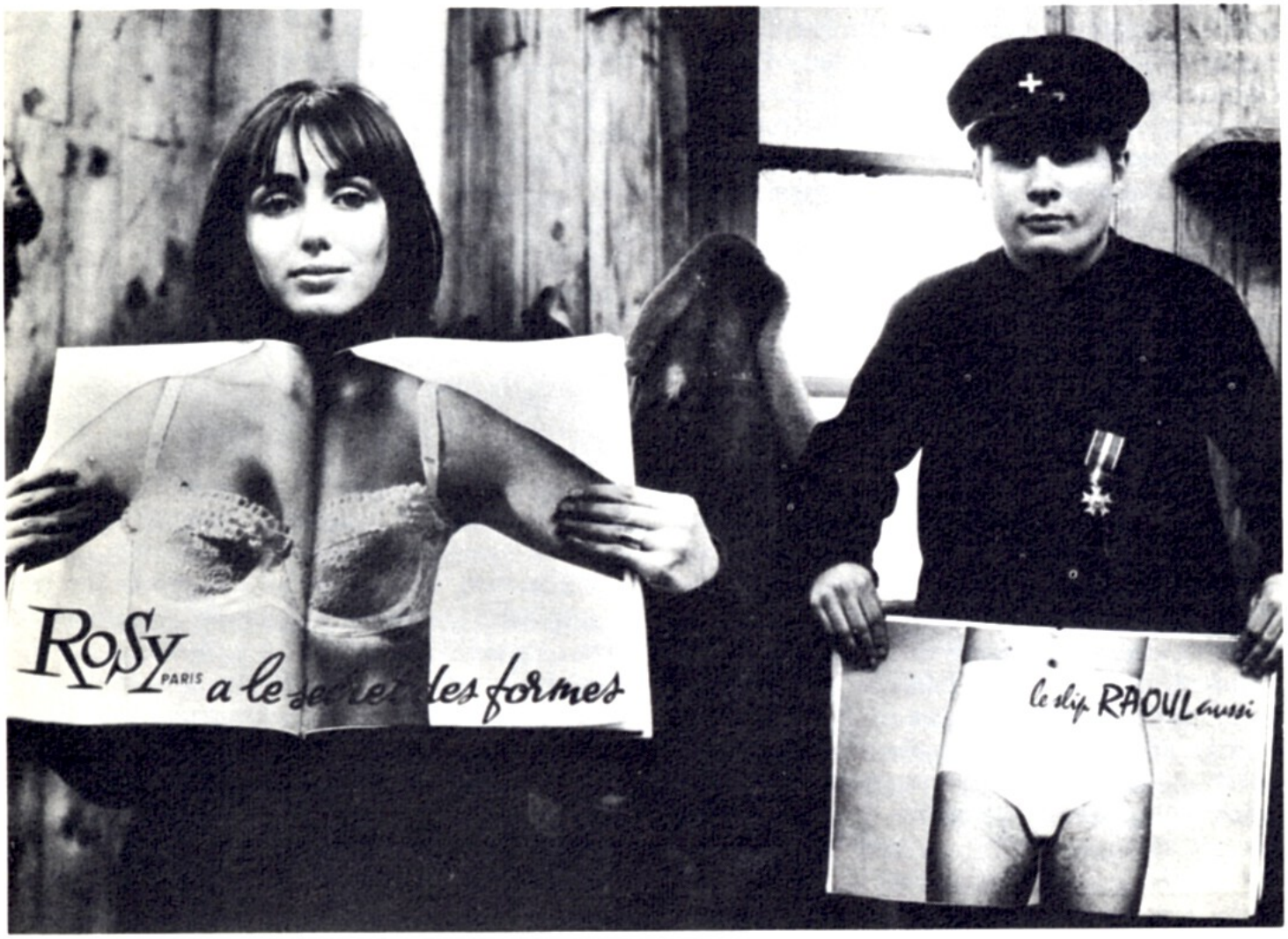
It has been said that Godard's output is one long film which has been chopped into 90-minute segments, and in some ways this is true. However, Godard has developed considerably since he started making features, and the Godard of *Masculin-Féminin* is very different from the Godard of *A Bout de Souffle*. The idea of one big film, though, does take into account the considerable cross-referencing between the movies. For instance, Mme Céline, the charwoman in *Une Femme Mariée*, turns up again, crippled, in *Made in U.S.A.* Sometimes the cross-references are a little more complex: Fritz Lang appears in *Le Mépris*, but the film that is being shot during the action is nothing that any real director would try to foist on a producer, and anyway Godard's Lang film is *Le Petit Soldat*, in which even the use of Erik Satie piano music suggests silent movies and the visuals (not to mention undercurrents in the plot) recall *Die Spinnen*. Likewise, *Alphaville* is represented as a Parris Island of the soul, and the film has a simple Samuel Fuller ethic of the fight of the individual conscience against dehumanising logic. But Fuller appears not in *Alphaville* but in *Pierrot le Fou*, while *Made in U.S.A.* is dedicated to him and Nicholas Ray.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the articles in this book refer frequently to other Godard films. This edition, updated with articles on the films after *Deux ou trois choses*, includes two 'second generation' pieces (by Jim Hillier and Michael Walker) which emerged from Robin Wood's extramural classes at the University of London. To let the book adequately reflect a range of opinion about Godard, I have not attempted to edit the articles into any sort of consistency, and there are many differences of opinion, even direct contradictions. A brief synopsis has been included on each film for readers who have not seen it. These synopses cannot be blamed on individual

writers; I have tried to keep them as objective and free from interpretation as possible.

The reason for doing this book as a collection of essays rather than as a monograph is that Godard invites such a wide range of interpretations that a single, personal view is unlikely to do him anything like complete justice. Indeed, one sometimes feels that almost anything one can say about Godard will be true. Certainly, there is evidence in his films to support a very wide range of interpretations. This is not surprising in view of the lack of coherence in his later work. Godard, in the final analysis, is an observer, a collector of fragmentary perceptions, or at least, the results so far of the search that Godard has been conducting in his films add up to a remarkable anthology of detailed observations. So Godard remains in a state of highly sophisticated confusion. To sum up his work to date, one can again go back to quoting Novalis: 'We search everywhere for the absolute and we only find things.'

Still: Les Carabiniers — *Vénus (Geneviève Galéa) and Michel Ange (Albert Juross).*



A BOUT DE SOUFFLE

Charles Barr

Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo), driving a stolen car, shoots a police motor-cyclist who tails him on a country road. Wanted by the Parisian police, he moves in with his girl-friend, Patricia Franchini (Jean Seberg), an American student and aspiring journalist. He tries to raise money to go to Rome with her. After a night together, she betrays him to the police, and although she warns him, he is shot.

Godard himself makes a brief appearance in *A Bout de Souffle*. He plays the man who first points out Michel to the police.

Both Michel and Godard are wearing dark glasses. Godard peers out from behind a newspaper (in which he has seen Michel's photograph) as Michel did in the first shot of the film. He walks very obviously in front of Michel's stationary car, comparing the face with the photo, yet Michel doesn't notice him.

In a way, this implausibility is just a sign of Godard's indifference to surface naturalism, like the passers-by who stare at the camera in the street scenes and the passers-by who *don't* stare when Michel is dying. This convention he extends into a method of analysis, detaching people from the external world in order to study them more clearly. Bruno in *Le Petit Soldat*, hesitating whether to kill the man he has been ordered to, drives his car level with that of his target, aims the gun, and continues alongside, 'frozen'; yet the man never looks at him. On a naturalistic level this is ridiculous, but what might otherwise seem a rather suspect device, a short-cut, is justified by its aptness to Bruno's dream-like state of mind. Likewise the scene from *A Bout de Souffle* is not simply a cartoon-like compression of the action, but a sign of Michel's indifference to danger,

Still: Patricia (Jean Seberg) asks Michel if she is prettier than the girl in the picture.

amounting to a self-destructive urge; it seems almost as if it were Michel himself acting as informer.

This is valid whether or not one recognizes Godard playing the part. The scene takes on a greater resonance when one reflects that Godard, the creator of Michel, is intervening in his story, guiding it towards its end. He intervenes quite arbitrarily; wanders around, like a director on set. It is Godard who points out Michel to the police (like a director giving instructions) at the moment that he drives away—as if, for story purposes, calculating to let him get just out of immediate range. The iris-out on Godard which ends the sequence—a deliberate archaic device, used once earlier—again reminds us of the director's hand. The scene is a concentration of the devices by which, here and in later films, Godard reminds us that he is putting together the story for us. Objections to the arbitrariness of his endings are undercut by this emphasis on the convention, on the fact that we are watching a film. At one moment in the love scene of *Alphaville*, Lemmy and Natasha look out at us like two stars posing for a publicity picture (compare that of Bogart which Michel confronts in *A Bout de Souffle*), and Godard illuminates their faces alternately as though preparing to light a shot. The subsequent happy ending in *Alphaville*, ridiculed by some critics, is consciously a 'film' happy ending, a sort of wish-fulfilment: though Godard makes us aware that he is imposing it wilfully, it is nevertheless organic in that Lemmy is persuading Natasha to behave *like* a heroine—to live up to the conventions of 'legend'. Similarly at the end of *A Bout de Souffle*, the arrival of Antonio with a gun for Michel, at the same time as the police, is arbitrary. Michel refuses to escape or to take the gun; Antonio throws it directly into his path. It seems to be an image of an external fate intervening, yet Michel's act of picking up the gun, which causes the police to shoot, is a free acceptance of this fate. Moreover, he has already chosen his fate, ultimately, by staying with Patricia instead of leaving Paris. As Lemmy emulates one kind of film-star, Michel emulates another: Godard the story-teller provides the ending which each invites. This sort of interdependence between will and fate is nothing new in drama; what is modern is the characters' self-consciousness about their rôles, and the sophisticated attitude of author and audience to the patterns of 'legend'.

The contradictions of Godard's own appearance—a narrative scene but a director's intervention; an arbitrary intervention yet one at which Michel seems to connive—are central to the film, and foreshadow his later films.

At the risk of seeming to load more on to this scene that it can take, I want to suggest a further association. There is a strong tradition that Shakespeare in *Hamlet* acted the part of the ghost—the figure of an 'objective' morality pressing in upon the confused individual whom he has created. It is almost as though he had poured so much of himself uncritically into Hamlet that he had symbolically to get outside him. Shakespeare 'is' both Hamlet and the ghost; Godard 'is' both Michel and the informer (the follower of official morality). Both confrontations, and both works, give an odd sense of an author's private debate or experiment, which is not yet fully resolved in dramatic terms. This whole parallel could be extended much further. The standard revenge play is behind Shakespeare as the gangster film is behind Godard. The theatrical references in *Hamlet* have a range and function similar to the cinematic ones in Godard's films. Hamlet himself, with his intellectual jargon, travel, paradoxes, practical jokes, self-dramatisation,

Still: Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and Patricia (Jean Seberg) step out down the Champs Elysées.

NEW YORK
Herald Trib

world-weariness, obsession with death and, not least, his ambivalence towards women, is the type of a Godard hero (Michel, Bruno in *Le Petit Soldat*, Ferdinand in *Pierrot le Fou*). The tension between contemplation and action, and between ideal and real, are recurrent Godard themes, notably in *Pierrot le Fou*. Such parallels are not superficial, and one may be more able to grasp the orientation of *A Bout de Souffle* (particularly in the context of Godard's later films) if one sees that Godard's relation to Michel is something like Shakespeare's to Hamlet. In this film Godard's concern is, like Shakespeare's, to sort out, from a confrontation between rebellion and rigidity within a closed society, some stable values, as well as a more meaningful dramatic pattern to work

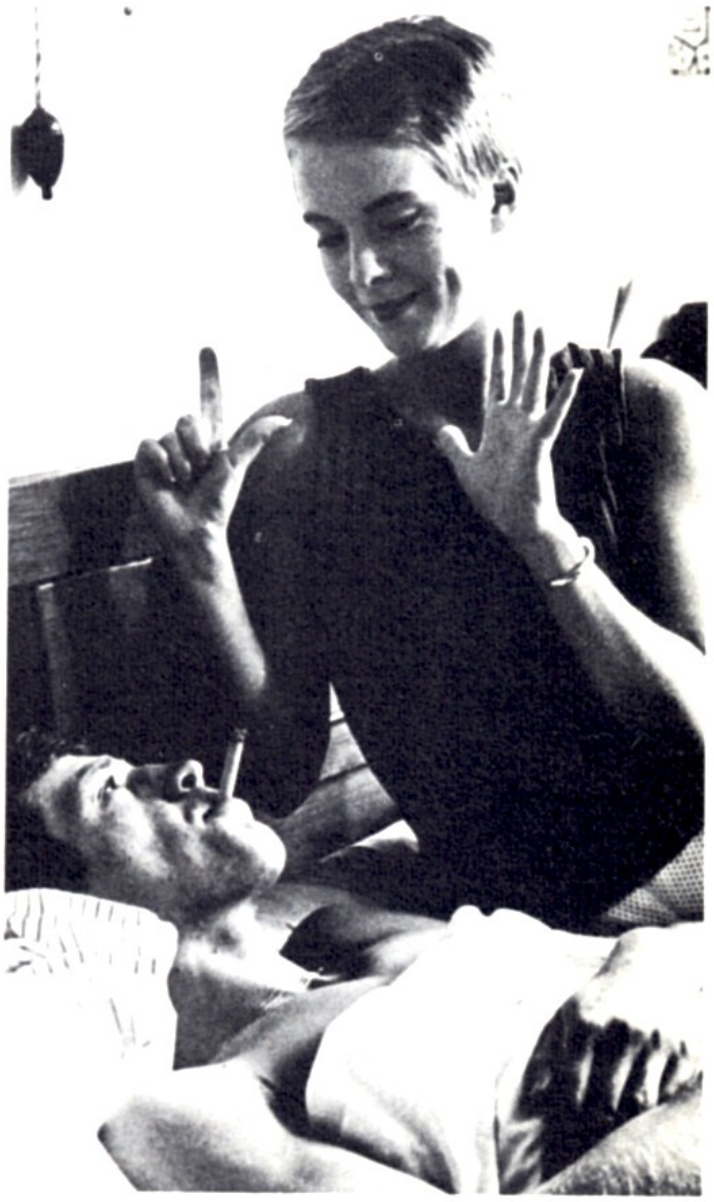
Stills. The first (and only) screen kiss in Godard. Right: Patricia tells how many lovers she has had.

with subsequently.

Obviously Shakespeare in *Hamlet* gets much further. *A Bout de Souffle* is only the start of the *Hamlet* which Godard is still making. (One suspects that Godard's view of the modern world would prevent him from producing anything that is more serene than *Hamlet*.) Though there is a strong continuity with his later films, *A Bout de Souffle* is a tentative work.

Michel's shooting of the policeman, near the start, is presented in a remote, stylised way: close-up of Michel's gun, a rather beautiful longish shot of the policeman (whose face we don't see) falling back into some bushes, long shot of Michel running away across a field. Then he is in Paris. This abruptness conveys how he is able to shut himself off from any feeling of shock. His other actions, stealing cars and money, are done and shown in the same casual manner. Borne along in exhilaration by the film, one can easily slip into identifying too easily with Michel, his freedom and 'honesty'. But freedom from what? The context of his actions is very thin; his impulses lack an 'objective correlative'. In case this seems a stale and irrelevant criterion, it is worth considering how firmly in his later work Godard supplies just this, relating the main action to a politically and socially turbulent world by which the characters are oppressed. In *Pierrot le Fou* not only is there the continual weight of reference to, for instance, Vietnam, but the oppressive social milieu which Pierrot flees is presented with a sharpness which colours the whole of the action that follows. *Alphaville* presents the same world in a diagrammatic form, a world where emotion is eliminated or prostituted and where violence is normal. Lemmy's first killing, of the man in the bedroom, is done in the same stylised way as Michel's, and his subsequent violence is similarly casual, but the moral overtones are quite different. Nor is it conclusive to argue that Lemmy is one sort of hero, Michel another, and that they meet appropriately different ends: the distinction exists, but the links between the two men are strong also.

The films have in common the theme of imagination versus logic. Michel trying to get Patricia to Rome is like Lemmy taking Natasha to the Outerlands. Patricia is committed to society and its values: she must work at the Sorbonne, take her chances as a journalist, etc.



Early on she asks Michel, when he mentions horoscopes, '*Qu'est-ce que c'est l'horoscope?*' Her French isn't too good, but this is hardly a difficult word . . . the exchange is schematised to set Patricia's blankness against Michel's concern with the future, which he goes on to explain. Her failure of verbal understanding stands for a failure of moral understanding. Her vision doesn't extend beyond the present (she can't respond to his impulse to go to Rome). Likewise her final question, '*Qu'est-ce que c'est dégueulasse?*', followed by her abrupt turning-away, implies the lack of a whole moral dimension: her betrayal 'means' nothing to her. The challenge to her of Michel's personality resembles the data with which Lemmy confronts Alpha-60; she tries to cope by using logic, and the results are disastrous.

In this sense Michel stands for love and vision (it is clear where Godard's own sympathies lie) but he does so only in a pathetically tenuous and compromised way. This in itself doesn't make the film incoherent—it is the pattern of many gangster films—but it is notable that Godard doesn't use this pattern again: his films since *A Bout de Souffle* have shown intelligent men reacting violently against their environment to seek love and freedom (Bruno, Lemmy, Ferdinand and Pierrot), or, sometimes, brutish heroes (those of *Les Carabiniers*, Arthur in *Bande à Part*) whose conditioning by society is acutely analysed. Michel was an awkward mixture. A hero coming from nowhere; a pattern of questioning, from the POURQUOI spelt out in cigarette packets on a bedroom wall, through all Patricia's questions to the final line; a dead-end. It is the only Godard film which seems at all vulnerable to the charge that his deep concern about civilisation is something read into his films by admirers who, in Raymond Durgnat's words, 'impregnate his blandness with their pain'. The final impression is of a tentative film, a 'run through' of ideas, characters and styles which Godard is testing in action, fitting together in a slightly makeshift way: his own brief appearance to guide the action can be seen, in retrospect, as a sort of cryptogram admitting this. Clearly Godard learnt a lot simply from the act of making this film, whose relation to his later work is hinted at by the opening words of Bruno's narration in *Le Petit Soldat*: 'The time for action is past. I have grown older. The time for reflection has come.'

Still: Patricia betrays Michel to the police.

LE PETIT SOLDAT

Richard Winkler

Bruno Forestier (Michel Subor) is a deserter from the French Army who works in Switzerland for a right-wing terrorist organisation (in effect, the O.A.S.). He is ordered to kill Palivoda, a broadcaster with Arab sympathies. Bruno meets, photographs and falls in love with Véronica Dreyer (Anna Karina), not knowing that she works for the other side, i.e. the F.L.N. After his first, reluctant and abortive attempts to kill Palivoda, he is captured and tortured by the Arabs. To earn freedom for himself and Véronica in South America he kills Palivoda, only to find that his side has captured Véronica and tortured her to death.

Bruno Forestier is '*un merdeur*', a man who refuses to do what is expected of him precisely because it is expected of him. He is a mystery to both sides: suspected by the O.A.S. of being a double agent, he baffles the F.L.N. by refusing to speak under torture. A man without loyalties, without ideals, he is loyal to an ideal of himself. 'What matters is not how others see you but how you see yourself', he tells Veronica and adds, significantly, that the words are his own. He is a deserter, an exile, a fugitive from politics, the Napoleonic 'tragedy of our time'. He points out to Jacques the house where Mme de Staël, the most renowned of Napoleonic exiles, lived with Benjamin Constant: a moment later Paul interrupts that they are arriving at the radio station and Bruno is about to see the man he has been ordered to kill.

Bruno does not know 'where to give his heart'. For him Communism and Catholicism share a common ideal, but an ideal he cannot share. *Un merdeur*, he refuses to pretend that 'a Pekin tram-driver' is his brother. He regrets the passing of the heroic idealism of the Thirties, but not the passing of a specific ideal. (For him Malraux and Drieu la Rochelle are equally noble.) And 'perhaps regret is the start of freedom': freedom from all coercive ideals, freedom 'to come to recognize the sound of your own voice, the shape of your own face'. This is Bruno's truth, an identity that will not betray him.

Bruno roots his truth in images: his own image, 'hard and mysterious', reflected in mirrors and the glass door of the lift; Veronica's image caught by his camera; the image of a summer day caught by Aragon's lines. 'To photograph a face', he says, 'is to photograph the soul behind it. Photography is truth.' Photographing Veronica, he falls in love with her image. For him her beauty, the way she wears her hair, the colour of her eyes, are her truth. Judging her, ethics are already aesthetics. But images are treacherous and Bruno's love is betrayed no less surely than Ferdinand's in *Pierrot le Fou* and Michel Poiccard's in *A Bout de Souffle*. Truth, Bruno discovers, can lie and lies can convey the truth. Veronica is betrayed to the O.A.S. by 'recognising the sound' of Bruno's voice on the tape: Veronica confesses her love to Bruno by lying to him over the telephone. The torturers of both Bruno and Veronica identify them by their photographs, by 'the shape of their faces'.

For Bruno image and idea, illusion and reality must correspond. He would like to die

Un document historique :
VINGT ANS APRÈS

like Thomas l'Imposteur, shamming death. In fact the reverse happens: reality becomes illusion. Threatened with death by the F.L.N., Bruno re-enacts the suicide of a resistance hero and throws himself through a window, not knowing which floor it is on. Godard's camera tilts down the front of a block of flats with a sickening sensation of falling. But it is the block where Veronica, not Laszlo, lives. The camera breaks its fall on Veronica scrutinising the ground (where we 'expect' Bruno's body to be) and Bruno's voice tells us that she is working for the F.L.N. Veronica is accosted by Jacques and her fate is sealed. Bruno did not, like Pierre Brossolette, die when he jumped through the window. But, betrayed by Veronica, he dies inwardly with her. The reality of continued existence becomes for him an empty illusion. In this crucial sequence, Godard's *mise en scène* both expresses and transcends Bruno's situation, by inverting it: illusion becomes reality. The 'suicidal' tilting shot 'lies' to us, but it conveys the truth of Veronica's betrayal and the death in Bruno's soul. It is *because* the cinema is pure illusion, as Michel Ange discovers in *Les Carabiniers*, that it is 'truth twenty-four times a second'.

Bruno loves and is betrayed by an image. For him Veronica's beauty is truth, her truth beauty. Her identity becomes part, an inseparable part, of his own: a certitude to set against the surrounding chaos. This certitude Bruno seeks to define and, defining, to iconize. He transposes Veronica's being into his own terms: her image is annexed to his private vocabulary of 'truth'. Thus, his first sight of her reminds him of a Giraudoux heroine. Later, he wonders whether her eyes are Renoir grey or Velasquez grey. Photographing her, he seeks to abstract her soul (she says it is like a police interrogation) and imprison it in his camera. (His camera cannot lie: it, like his gun, is 'hard, black and incorruptible'.)

But Veronica cannot be iconized: she is too supremely alive. Like Marianne Renoir, she is an idealist without theories. The French, she says simply, had an ideal under the Occupation (ironically, Bruno's father was shot as a collaborator) but they have lost it in Algeria. Her working for the F.L.N. needs no other explanation. Not believing in freedom, she

Stills. Bruno Forestier (Michel Subor) aims at Palivoda from behind a copy of L'Express. Right: Bruno's and our first sight of Veronica Dreyer (Anna Karina).

does not have to be free to feel happy: she simply feels happy. She loves Bruno but neither knows nor cares *why*. Like Marianne, like Odile in *Bande à Part*, like Nana in *Vivre sa Vie*, her natural medium is music. To Bruno music is a subject for theorising, not a source of spontaneous joy. Veronica's flat is bare, almost unfurnished (she has just moved in) but completely inhabited. Its bare white walls and hard angles need no relief apart from her presence. She embodies her own *mise en scène*. Conversely, the wall of Bruno's room is covered with photographs, icons of violence, which Godard's camera slowly explores before it discovers the man and woman in bed. Bruno sleeps with *La Condition Humaine* literally at his elbow. Awake, he is struck by Veronica's beauty, her beautiful image. Veronica, essentially human, merely says she is hungry. When they play their 'childish' game Veronica draws a '*petit soldat*' and a girl; Bruno writes '*je t'aime*'. Veronica, like Marianne, could say, 'I look at you with feelings. You speak to me with words.'

Veronica 'lives her life', untroubled by freedom, holding to a simple ideal. She loves Bruno: he loves her image. By being more and less than her image, she betrays him. (When she 'lies' to Bruno over the telephone, Laszlo moves a pawn. They are both pawns: they are both vulnerable.) In deciding that Veronica's eyes are Velasquez grey, he commits himself irrevocably to abstraction, to the image, not the being; for the late Velasquez, as Pierrot discovers, 'no longer painted objects but the space between objects', that is, abstractions. Bruno equally seeks to abstract Veronica's 'soul' and embody it in an incorruptible image. He cannot succeed and his failure, her betrayal are foreshadowed when, photographing Veronica's exuberant life, he suddenly feels he is photographing death. Moreover, when Bruno decides that Veronica's eyes are Velasquez grey, her eyes are lowered and we cannot see them. Marianne, likewise, lowers her eyes before replying to Pierrot's fateful question, 'Will you betray me?'

Like the painter of Poe's Oval Portrait, Bruno is betrayed by life. The reality he loves and trusts is revealed as illusion. Despairing of ideals, he jealously guards his freedom, only to choose a false ideal. He despises actors for alienating their freedom, for confusing (like Robert in *Une Femme Mariée*) illusion with reality, for not being true to themselves. But he too is an actor. Escaping from the F.L.N., he re-enacts a suicide (so persuasively that Laszlo omits to fire until too late) and, surviving, dies inwardly. Betrayed by Veronica, his life, we have said, becomes an illusion. He has 'plenty of time': time, that is, 'for reflection' on his life as a *petit soldat*. Bruno's fate is to re-enact his own past: the betrayal of his lonely ideal, the loss of his freedom. Outside his memory, his monologue, outside *Le Petit Soldat*, he has no existence. He is an actor: he is unfree.

'Where have you come from? Where are you? Where are you going?' Klee's questions are meaningless to Bruno. Trapped in an ever-present past, he has no future. Like the inhabitants of Alphaville, he moves in an endless circle, without hope, without despair. He enters Geneva (his *Capitale de la Douleur*) as Lemmy Caution enters Alphaville, lighting the first of innumerable cigarettes. But unlike Lemmy, Bruno joins Harry Dickson in limbo. Unable 'to go in a straight line' ('to cut his way with a dagger') he cannot 'complete the circle'. Like Lemmy, he knows that 'the dead do not have to die again': knowing it, he is trapped in an illusion of life, an illusion which re-enacts the death of its reality. Betrayed by Veronica, the identity he trusts becomes a prison: behind 'the sound of his own voice, the shape of his own face' lies a dead soul. Dead, Bruno has to die again—twenty-four times a second.

LE PETIT SOLDAT

Barry Boys

The documentation on the Algerian War is vast and comprehensive. It includes denunciations of torture ('La Question', 'La Gangrène', 'Contre la torture'), apologies and justifications for torture (the official Wuillaume Report, 'La Guerre Moderne'). The last category is profoundly disturbing and has received much attention in the commentaries of the Maurice Audin Committee. Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Petit*

Still: Bruno (Michel Subor) and Veronica (Anna Karina) at the photographic session in her flat.

Soldat was made in Geneva in 1960 and immediately banned.

The situation depicted in Geneva was common. Geneva and Zurich in particular contained ill-assorted groups, comprising French supporters of the F.L.N. who had fled arrest in France as well as extreme right-wing supporters of the O.A.S., directing their organisation from neutral territory. Add to this already combustible mixture the Algerian members of the F.L.N. who were seeking political education, financial support for the war or armaments and it becomes clear that the background for Godard's political adventure movie is far from fanciful.

It derives its form from the monologue of Bruno Forestier (Michel Subor), a young

Still: a secretary types in the Arab headquarters as Laszlo Szabo tries out a new generator.

French deserter working for a right-wing 'anti-terrorist commando' financed by a Poujadist deputy 'who had his hour of glory under Vichy'. As the narrative elements of the film are mostly conveyed through Forestier's monologue, Godard's camera is free to contemplate the events that mould the characters and comment on the characters who mould the events. It is as though Godard hears—at times disinterested, at others deeply involved—and then looks at what he hears. The result is an object-lesson in overcoming Brecht's 'Five Difficulties in Writing the Truth'. Godard shows the dilemma of Bruno Forestier as one for which there are no easy solutions; only a complex picture can be given of a complicated situation. The apparent ambiguities of the film are the ambiguities of its central character, and these reflect the perversity of the situation rather than the perversity of Godard's imagination.

The reality of the film is the reality of Bruno's recollections. The first line indicates the origins of the method Godard has employed—'The time for action is passed. I have grown older. The time for reflection has come'.

As Bruno drives into Geneva he does two things which set the tone for the rest of the film. He impulsively stops his car to photograph a couple kissing under a poster which reads LOVE ONE ANOTHER; he then buys a newspaper headlining a terrorist killing, at which he expresses disgust. From the opposition of his disgust with the terrorists and their methods on the one hand, and his love for the girl Veronica (Anna Karina) on the other, springs the rhythmic counterpoint of the movie and of Bruno's dilemma.

His colleagues in the secret organisation, Jacques and Paul (Jean-Jacques Huet and Paul Beauvois), order him to assassinate Palivoda, a Swiss working for the Arabs; Veronica asks him to take photographs of her as she has an ambition to become an actress. The ease with which he handles a camera to take shots of Veronica, and the difficulty he has in handling a gun to take shots at Palivoda are the extremes of his problem.

'To photograph a face is to photograph the soul behind it. Photography is truth. And the cinema is the truth twenty-four times a second', he says of his camera. Of his gun he says 'It was a beautiful object. Hard, black, incorruptible'. Incorruptible because it is corruption itself.

Bruno is living in limbo, where there are no answers to the questions 'Where do you come from? Where are you going?' that he reads on a painting by Paul Klee. He dreams of escaping to Brazil. His car is a symbol for this escape, and meeting Veronica seems to give the dream substance. At one moment he calls himself 'a man without ideals' and in the next he says 'The ideal would be for Veronica to come with me to Brazil'. His attempt to give his dream tangible form involves them both in a compromise with destruction.

Death by assassination, by suicide, by torture are the forms of violence with which Bruno becomes involved. This is the stark reality against which he must set his intuitions of a more coherent existence. This opposition between illusion and reality, the interior and the exterior, life and death, expresses itself throughout the movie. Bruno wants to open an art gallery somewhere; the organisation has just killed a professor of Art History at the University. As he photographs the vivacious Veronica he suddenly has the feeling that he is photographing death. As he goes to meet Paul and Jacques for the first time, not knowing where to get off the train, a girl indicates the name of the station by quoting La Fontaine; next to her a small child plays with a plastic toy gun. His car, the symbol of his freedom, is used by the organisation to fake a street accident

which involves him with the police. Rather than be sent back to France as a deserter he agrees, with a regretful nod of the head, to kill Palivoda.

'Perhaps regret is the start of freedom.' Freedom for Bruno is the freedom not to kill, not to do anything, unless he wants to; what Godard himself has called a *practical* freedom. 'It's simply that there are things you do at certain moments in your life, and not at others.'

He feels that to kill Palivoda would be a defeat, and for him to be beaten is a form of death. In his first conversation with Veronica he says that his father was shot at the time of the Liberation. 'He was a friend of Drieu la Rochelle.' Drieu la Rochelle, apart from being a collaborator, was obsessed by suicide, and his 'Récit Secret' is the story of that obsession: *Pour moi ce qui me séduit le plus, c'est un acte qui s'accomplit dans la solitude.*

Bruno feels that to assassinate Palivoda is to accept his own death, to be forever isolated. The attempt on Palivoda's life is an attempt on his own, and Palivoda's death would be his own suicide. This conflict is vividly presented when he looks into a mirror set in a bathroom cabinet and says to Veronica, 'I'm becoming a coward. It's odd. When I look at my face it doesn't seem to correspond with my inward idea of it. Which do you think is the more important, the interior or the exterior?'

She has no answer, since she is herself working for the Arabs. Bruno's confusion is demonstrated when he opens the cabinet to reveal the gun behind the image of his own face. His attempts to kill Palivoda are frustrated by unforseen hazards and his own hesitation. He directly identifies the assassination with suicide: 'When it's not your job, it's difficult to make repeated attempts to kill a man. It's like failing at suicide and trying again.'

He refuses to kill Palivoda, is accused by the French of being a double agent, is known to the Arabs. He decides to leave Geneva. It is irony enough that he is captured and tortured by the Arabs at the moment when he has broken with the French. It is doubly ironic that he attempts suicide while being tortured.

The presentation of the torture sequences horrifies by its casual mundanity. If savage details are required the Wuillaume report itself is more helpful. Godard's purpose is coincident with Pierre Vidal-Naquet's in his book 'Torture: Cancer of Democracy', in which the author comments on the fact that torture had become a *normal* instrument of intelligence and for those engaged in the war *a matter of routine*, part of a way of life. Bruno's torturers listen to music on a transistor radio and engage him in 'political discussions'; a girl, whose fiancé died under torture, reads Mao Tse-Tung's 'A spark can set the plain alight' while Laszlo (Laszlo Szabo) lights a handful of matches and slowly scorches Bruno's palms.

When he escapes, Bruno persuades Veronica to leave Geneva with him, but they are once more compromised by Jacques, who refuses to obtain passports for them unless Bruno completes his original mission and kills Palivoda. Checkmate. Bruno agrees. Paul and Jacques kidnap Veronica, torture her and kill her. Unaware of this, Bruno kills Palivoda. He is not a man who is completely lost, but one who loses everything.

Godard is careful to emphasize, however, that he loses everything not because he fought for one side or the other, but because of the war itself. A war which put Bruno Forestier in the position where to kill is the only 'passport' to his kind of freedom—with Veronica in Brazil. His film is neither a pacifist tract, nor an apology for fascism, nor a condemnation of the F.L.N. It is a study of a man in an intolerable situation, which Godard thought it possible to present. To look for a study of violence or an exposé of torture methods is to mistake a portrait for a diagram.

Godard has said that Bruno's situation is in some respects similar to Porthos's in the story Brice Parain tells Nana in *Vivre sa Vie*. In losing everything Bruno gains only the ability to question his attitudes and his actions. This is not enough, but it is a lot. 'But perhaps that's what's important. To come to recognise the sound of your own voice, the shape of your own face.'

His monologue is an attempt to give form to the apparent formlessness of his actions and the shapelessness of his dialogues with Veronica. 'What matters is not how others see you. It's how you see yourself'. The Bressonian monologue is Bruno's attempt to do both at once, to give a unity to his acts and thoughts.

This is, of course, part of Godard's constant search for an equilibrium between the natural and the artificial, the real and the imaginary. He seeks a correspondence between the external appearance and the inner idea, for a form 'hard and mysterious, like man's image and that which transcends it'. In the monologue of *Le Petit Soldat*, this is put in concrete terms by the use of heavy contrasts in Raoul Coutard's brilliant photography. The sound-track is non-naturalistic. Only significant sounds and even more significant silences remain.

Godard's film is an interrogation—of his characters and their actions, of the situation out of which the film sprang, of his own methods as a film-maker. But it is an interrogation which constantly attempts to define the question and the answer.

'I asked myself if I was happy to feel free or free to feel happy.' But Bruno's reality as described in his monologue is Godard's fiction as seen by his camera. Bruno's desire for freedom and happiness only accentuates the degree to which he is bound. His need for clarity produces only mystification. By his attempt to avoid further compromise he is thrown back on an anarchic individualism.

'Win or lose, I fight alone,' which is a murderous freedom. At the moment when he recognises himself in the mirror he isolates himself; seeking his freedom by murder he remains bound.

'The real passion of the twentieth century is servitude.' Camus: 'The Rebel'.

Still: Le Petit Soldat.

UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME

Edgardo Cozarinsky

Angela (Anna Karina), a stripper, wants to have a baby and get married. Her lover, Emile (Jean-Claude Brialy) does not. On a day when conception is most likely, Emile reaffirms his unwillingness and she goes for help to their friend Alfred (Jean-Paul Belmondo). By the time Emile has decided to let her have a baby, it is too late to do more than ensure that any resulting child could *be his.*

From the broken up, sparkling credits with back stage noises on the sound track, there is a festive excitement about *Une Femme est une Femme*. But what is celebrated is not so easy to recognize. Paris? (There is a reference to René Clair's *14 Juillet* in the credits.) A certain approach to the *ménage à trois* comedy? (Belmondo's surname in the film is Lubitsch, and the story line could be read as Lubitsch's *Design for Living* brought up to date.) Anna Karina? (Very evidently.)

But the idealized, intermittently musical daily life of Clair's early talkies is part of a vanished world as is Lubitsch's tenuous web of ellipses which rescued the most banal situations. Godard's Paris and the people who inhabit its noisy boulevards have no real roots, and the quotations in which he delights only bring this out more clearly. In *Une Femme est*

une Femme, as in his more obviously serious films, it is this uprootedness of modern experience that Godard explores and dramatizes (or exposes by de-dramatizing?). Even this close-knit texture of small bistros, strip-tease joints, political suspicion and conjugal wavering is constantly violated in its naturalistic surface, not just by the comic turns of the plot but by Godard's reminders not only that the film is a performance but that the projected images are themselves illusory. Karina walks behind a pillar in her strip gear and appears completely dressed in her street clothes. Later she flips into the air the egg she is frying, goes to answer the telephone and comes back to catch the egg in the pan. We are in a world whose Columbus was Méliès.

The film has a beauty that is brash and pathetic, like splintered coloured glass, fragments that somehow compose a picture while refusing to hold together: musical, sad, uproarious, definitely frail. It is this simultaneous celebration of beauty and its frailty, of gaiety and its ephemerality, of the transient nature of all emotion, that reveals in *Une Femme est une Femme* a peculiar romantic attitude, reserved and self denying, which is perhaps the only possible romanticism for a contemporary sensibility.

Even the plot devices of low comedy are here emptied of their mechanical utility and turned into the absurd particulars that clutter this day in November 1961, the day when Karina may conceive the child she wants. She uses the little calculating wheel, not to know when she may have intercourse without danger,

Stills. Left: Angela (Anna Karina) and Alfred (Jean-Paul Belmondo) want to be Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly in a musical with choreography by Michael Kidd. Right: Angela and her lover Emile (Jean-Claude Brialy).

but to make sure of its consequences—an ironic reversal that invests the little contraption with oracular dignity.

The characters who are called to perform are helpless and confused. Greek mythology, Hölderlin and Fritz Lang are brought into *Le Mépris* as dialectical arguments, arousing the characters into attitudes, illuminating their predicament with a moral reflection they cannot achieve by themselves. Film mythology sustains this function almost unaided in *Une Femme est une Femme*. There are many familiar traits in both Karina's Angela and Michel Piccoli's Paul in *Le Mépris*. According to Belmondo, Angela is '*une fille qui se trompe toujours*'. He draws this moral from his story about the girl who believes she has mixed up the notes written to her two lovers, and loses both by believing in her mistake; Paul makes clumsy efforts to ingratiate himself with his wife and his boss, and only manages to lose everything he cared for. *Le Mépris* is an almost solemn meditation on the inadequacy of a

Still: Emile (Jean-Claude Brialy) serenades Angela (Anna Karina).

divided sensibility for dealing with a classical, well defined set of moral issues. '*On pourrait dire aussi, pour tenter d'expliquer Paul, que c'est un personnage de* Marienbad *qui veut jouer le rôle d'un personnage de* Rio Bravo'. These are Godard's own words in the film's first treatment.

Angela, and in a way also Belmondo's Alfred, feel the same nostalgia for an unattainable, clear territory. They talk about their longing to be Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly, '*avec choréographie de Michael Kidd*', and immediately appear fixed in impossible postures against their drab, everyday surroundings. These shots are not frozen, for that would suggest an illusion of permanence, but the actors themselves try laboriously to hold postures for which they have neither the natural ability nor the professional training, and their quivering arms and legs indicate the effort. Karina will never be Cyd Charisse, nor Belmondo Gene Kelly, just as in *A Bout de Souffle* he could never be Bogart in spite of his appropriation of the speech mannerisms and lip rubbing. Both are creatures of a precarious world that is conscious of its own precariousness. The hard certainties of the traditional American film are beyond their reach.

Godard incorporates in the film all the dead matter, the opaque, meaningless surfaces of experience, which, like trivia in an assemblage, acquire meaning and exert an active function in their new context. A dialogue between Karina and Marie Dubois is composed of the casual sights they register while walking down the street. *Tu te laisses aller*, Aznavour's song coming from the jukebox in the bistro sequence, is heard complete, its three minutes in the sound-track filled on the screen by close-ups of a worried Karina inspecting photographs of Brialy and Belmondo with some cheap whores. Another instance of Godard's inclusion of found material, systematically practised in *Une Femme Mariée*, almost to the point of making out of the editing of magazine ads and street signs a kind of '*art trouvé*', is the repeated sequence where Karina and Brialy, having decided not to speak to each other, communicate their mutual resentment showing (complete or partially obscured) book titles. This is, of course, a light hearted game, far from the ominous or ironical weight that street signs have acquired in Godard's later films.

Still: Angela (Anna Karina).

There is even a moment of revelation when Godard edits into the film an unsuccessful take. Karina, in close-up, defends her emotionalism against Brialy's common sense. Women who cry are beautiful, she says. '*Moi, je trouve* con *les femmes modernes, qui essaient de limi . . . non, ça va . . . ça va pas? . . . ça va pas?*' she asks, realizing her mistake, and immediately comes the good take—'*Moi, je trouve* con *les femmes modernes qui . . . veulent imiter les hommes.*' By preserving the anguish of the character together with Karina's distress at her limited French, Godard has removed all distinction between Angela and the actress playing the role. The film has been justly defined as a documentary on Anna Karina, but it is Godard's invariable basic rule to expose the dramatic convention of his films (his debased Brechtianism, as his detractors call it) and make the spectator aware all the time that what he sees are actors illustrating an action for his benefit. In a moment of anger, Karina threatens to go back to Copenhagen; in another Brialy makes fun of her incapacity for rolling the French 'r'; by the end of the film it is she who appears to correct Brialy's pronunciation, only to make one of those puns of which Godard is so fond. '*Angela, tu es infame,*' he says, after satisfying her wish for maternity, so that they may never know if the possible child is his or Belmondo's, with whom she has been some hours earlier. '*Non*', she corrects, '*je suis* une *femme*' pretending to have understood '*une femme*' instead of '*infame*'.

It is this impossibility of recognizing a definite meaning in appearances that Godard dramatizes rather than using it to build up an aesthetic system, like Robbe-Grillet. Words may sound alike; faces may look alike; the expression on the face that says a mistaken line may be the right one. Karina was to express her distrust of language (spoken against shots of the back of her neck) in the first sequence of *Vivre sa Vie*, and later in the same film she questioned Brice Parain on the subject. Throughout *Le Mépris* there is a very involved play of different languages and approximate or deficient translation. These issues are present in *Une Femme est une Femme* as obstacles between the characters and their understanding of themselves. Karina asks Belmondo to say a lie (that it's raining) and then to say the truth (that the sun is shining) and can't see any difference in his face. '*On devrait en voir une, puisque la vérité est différente du mensonge.*'

The distrust of appearances and the emphasizing of dramatic convention account for the film's extensive use of play-within-a-play devices. A quarrel in the kitchen is framed by the open door, and Karina reminds Brialy that they should bow to the audience before beginning to insult each other. Music comes in operatically full-blown rushes after each sentence spoken at the dinner table, underlining the speech as in a recitative. When left alone, Karina enacts a wish fulfilment routine with a pillow under her cardigan, moving in front of the mirror like a pregnant woman would. She also reads very emphatically, and turns out the lights at the end. (Camille is the name of the character in the tirade she reads and also Bardot's name in *Le Mépris*, both possibly homages to Renoir's *La Carrozza d'Oro*, not only the most perfect and beautiful film made about '*la paradoxe du comédien*' but also one of the most influential, from a theoretical point of view, upon French film makers of Godard's generation.)

But, finally, the film's chance of beauty lies in the preservation of Angela's (Karina's) frail emotions and stubborn will, amid the detonations of colour and sound that build up its fun-fair mood. Between Brialy's shallow practicality and the outsider's romanticism and resignation of Belmondo, the only way she has

to realize her wish is the absurd one she chooses. In a world devoid of certainties, the conventions of a vaudeville can work seriously. '*Je ne sais plus si je dois rire ou pleurer*', she says, and it is later said of the whole proceedings that it doesn't matter if they are a comedy or a tragedy, being anyway a masterpiece. *Une Femme est une Femme* may not be a masterpiece, and I am not even sure if it is a very good film. But somehow I don't care. If standards of judgement must adapt to the changing nature of the judged matter, the only way to come to terms with the film, as with all of Godard's output, is to appreciate the range of meaning not imprisoned in the work but alluded to, pointed at, juggled with, even contradicted. This is, in a way, a conditional art, self-questioning, investigating the sensibility of the 'sixties on more levels than journalism, the plastic arts or social anthropology have dared to tread.

'*Je voudrais savoir ce qu'il y a derrière ton visage. Je le regarde depuis dix minutes et je ne sais rien, rien, rien.*' (Jean Seberg in *A Bout de Souffle*).

Photograph: Godard (right) directing.

VIVRE SA VIE

V.F. Perkins

Nana (Anna Karina) works in a record store. Unable to pay her rent, she drifts into prostitution, at first casually and then professionally, taking up with a ponce (Sady Rebbot). She tries to break away from him to live normally with a young man, but is killed in a shooting incident.

'Suppose that for some reason or other I wanted to bring into a film a Sorbonne professor of the history of philosophy. There would certainly be nothing to prevent my having him talk about Kant's teaching. But that would be a ridiculous abuse of film, from an aesthetic viewpoint. Why? Because the spectator does not go to the cinema in order to listen to discussions.' (Gabriel Marcel: 'Possibilités et limites de l'art cinématographique' in Revue Internationale de Filmologie.)

Towards the end of *Vivre sa Vie* the philosopher Brice Parain speaks at some length to the movie's heroine and to its audience about the problems presented by the inadequacies of language as the medium of thought and communication, and by human failures in the use of language. He talks about the teaching of Kant and the nineteenth-century Germans, and their significance in the history of philosophy. He discusses the relationship between

errors, lies and truth.

It is quite possible that this episode in Godard's film was directly inspired, or provoked, by the dogma quoted above. Certainly much of the film's force and value comes from its determined attack on preconceptions about the nature of cinema and how a film ought to behave.

In particular *Vivre sa Vie* upsets the notion of a correct balance between the word and the image. The rule that it most consistently flouts is the rule that in the cinema, 'essentially a visual art', the important statements are to be made by the picture. There are a number of sequences where the image is made to serve the interest of the spoken word, most notably the section in which passages from a treatise on prostitution are recited in question and answer form. Here the dialogue offers all the essential information while the images themselves take over the normal functions of a commentary.

The film is constructed very largely as a series of dialogues on which Godard's camera plays a suite of variations, offering both an actual *mise-en-scène* and a string of suggestions as to how one *might* film a conversation. This impression is heightened by a substantial continuity of décor; five of the heroine's encounters take place in café-bars and the similarities of setting and action serve to point up the differences in presentation. As a film-maker, Godard remains a critic speculating on the nature of film and the possibilities of direction. One of his concerns, here and elsewhere, is to test the relative strengths of language and the movie image as media for various forms of communication.

An aspect of Godard's 'ridiculous misuse' of the cinema in *Vivre sa Vie* is the film's refusal to settle into any single category. On one level

Photograph (Left): Anna Karina talking to Brice Parain. Still (right): Nana (Anna Karina).

Stills: Nana (Anna Karina) and her first client (Gilles Quéant).

it is a documentary about prostitution. Moving on from there, it is a 'dramatised documentary' using its central character to present a typical case-history. But the case-history is extended into pure fiction to become the story of a young woman seeking her place in an elusive and alien world. At its most fictional the film again becomes documentary—as sketches of life in Paris in 1962 and as a portrait of Anna Karina.

The various approaches alternate and, occasionally, fuse. Thus the generalised treatise on the lives of prostitutes acts also as an account of Nana's life and carries us over a gap in the narrative: the development and decay of her relationship with a ponce, Raoul. Similarly the opening sequences, which offer a very personal account of the disintegration of Nana's world, contribute as well to the case-history through their schematic portrayal of stages in her drift towards prostitution.

But while it is important to recognise the existence of these and other relationships between the film's various strands, the overall

pattern remains one of disconnection and contradiction:

It is in the narrative with its leaps in time, its arbitrary succession of incidents and its rapid oscillations of mood: Nana's desperate submission to 'The First Man' is followed by joyful contentment in a meeting with an old friend Yvette, which gives way to the indulged nostalgia of a juke-box song, which breaks off into the violence and panic of a terrorist machine-gun fight.

It is in images which mirror Nana's precarious relationship with her environment by showing her in close-up against flat and unstable backgrounds (walls, mirrors, windows) so that she exists in a goldfish world, at the same time engulfed by and detached from the life around her. Writing her letter in a café, Nana seems to be sitting in front of a window which overlooks a wide, tree-lined street; but the 'view' turns out to be a lifeless photographic wallpaper.

It is in the mismatching of image and soundtrack—particularly of the image and the spoken or written word: a passage quoted from a romantic novelette is set against a candid-camera shot of the city streets.

It is in the gratuitous nature of camera-work which frequently defies any notion of natural harmony between action and presentation. Swaying and shifting in random patterns, the camera follows the process of Nana's mind but ignores the demands of 'logic' and the expectations of the audience. Scenes whose action is static are filmed with a mobile camera, but the precise nature of the camera's movements is so far irrelevant to the recorded settings, faces, movements and gestures, that the various treatments could be interchanged from scene to scene without affecting our knowledge or understanding of the action in any substantial way.

It is in the conflict between a narrative which offers the killing of Nana as something completely arbitrary (the point is that it's pointless) and a series of references (Joan of Arc, Porthos, 'The Oval Portrait') which by prediction make her death a formal necessity.

It is, above all, in the contradiction between the movie's structure and its tone. The framework is one that suggests Brechtian detachment: a series of twelve tableaux, each introduced by a caption summarising, explaining (or question-

Still: one of the prostitutes in Vivre sa Vie, *seen in the film from a fast-moving car.*

Still: Nana (Anna Karina) finds happiness with the Young Man (Peter Kassowitz).

ing) its content. The images themselves have an austerity of lighting and composition that recalls the Bresson of *Pickpocket*. Yet this apparently austere and endistancing form is at the service of a rich and gloomy romanticism. The clashes of mood and incident, the separation and titling of the twelve episodes serve not to clarify or emphasize a central thesis but rather to stress discontinuity and to force on our attention the *absence* of a binding idea or programme.

In effect, Godard's approach turns the absence of a Subject into the main theme of the film. For it is the essence of his romanticism, and part of his debt to Nicholas Ray, that in denying or destroying the expected connections and coherences he hints at a hidden (or lost) harmony. His manner of insisting on the absence of a visible pattern comes close to suggesting the presence of one that is invisible.

Such deliberation is in the chaos of the surface, so emphatic is the conjunction of incompatible elements, that the film seems to

aspire to a level of vision at which everything would become intelligible and coherent. Given that this level of vision may be imagined but is not attained, *Vivre sa Vie* operates at the point where the romantic begins to yearn for the greener grass of mysticism. At times 'Her Life to Live' seems not to be the ideal title; the picture reaches out for something more along the lines of 'His Wonders to Perform'. Reaches out, but has not the nerve (equals courage or effrontery) to grasp. The approach to mysticism is the result of nostalgia, not of conviction: Joan of Arc is a contrast as well as a comparison. In Nana's world, gods are lost property that can be remembered but never reclaimed. For the most part the film, like its heroine, is driven back on to the simple slogan 'That's how it is'. *C'est comme ça*—elevation of No Comment into a moral and intellectual necessity —recurs with a range of emotional colourings as assertion, assent, acceptance, submission and anguish.

But these different attitudes are not represented with equal force. When Nana is at her most contented, in the conversation with Yvette ('Everything is beautiful . . . Things are what they are') the scene is embittered by its reference to Resnais' documentary on the Nazi extermination camps: Nana's repeated 'I am responsible' echoes the repeated 'I am not responsible' in *Nuit et Brouillard*. And there is certainly nothing on the film's affirmative side to balance the pointless brutality of the final scene. In the light of the details which Godard invents to heighten the cruelty of Nana's end, *c'est comme ça* becomes a statement of impotent despair.

To Nana herself the words offer a formula permitting escape from the responsibilities of thought and communication. She talks about accepting responsibility for all her actions, but in a tone of total complacency. Her most pleasant moments arrive when she can just be, feel or do, without being required to examine or explain her actions and motives. Her relationship with the Young Man is happy, but (because ?) it denies complexity; it is still at the stage where a difference of opinion can be dissolved by a declaration of love. By contrast, the failure of her relationship with Paul is accompanied by attempts at explanation, understanding and self-justification. Nana believes that life ought to be simple. Where it is not, she is often prepared to force it to seem so by refusing to think or communicate. Her attitude is opposed in the film by Brice Parain.

Godard's own position remains ambiguous. The passage quoted from the novelette which offers the destruction of logic as a solution is not presented as Nana's point of view. It is offered as directorial comment. But here, as in *Alphaville*, it is difficult to determine how seriously the attack on ordered thought is intended. One possibility is that Godard sees 'logic' as thought divorced from its necessary context of feeling. That would be consistent with the effect of the 'treatise on prostitution' where the images restore the emotional overtones excluded from the dialogue's bare statements of fact. Still, the opposition between cold reason and blind agitation seems both simple and arbitrary. There are other alternatives which the movie ignores.

Vivre sa Vie is not alone among Godard's movies in presenting words, thought and logic as the enemies of feeling. But perhaps, given the character and temperament of its heroine, the film could not do otherwise. For Nana is a sleep-walker, another of Godard's Preminger women. She relates to the heroines of *Whirlpool* and *River of No Return* in much the same way as the heroine of *Pierrot le Fou* relates to Carmen Jones, or as the Jean Seberg of *Breathless* relates to the Jean Seberg of *Bonjour Tristesse* and the Jean Simmons of *Angel Face*. It is this which makes nonsense of the publicity

Still: Nana (Anna Karina) in a scene cut from the British version—she goes around the hotel looking for a second girl for a client.

statement (which Godard seems to have endorsed) claiming that *Vivre sa Vie* is about a woman who 'sells her body but retains her soul'. If 'soul' is to be taken to mean individuality, that's precisely what Nana lacks. She has little sense of who she is. When she writes her letter she has to check up on the facts even of her appearance. She is a stranger to herself: '"I" . . . is someone else', she tells the police interrogator. A touching anxiety to be recognised as 'someone special' serves to point up her uncertain notion of her own identity.

Unable to achieve a definition of herself or her aims, Nana drifts—in complicity with the world that would make her an object. Her story is the story of what happens to her, not of what she does. Only in the final episode does she actually decide on a course of action, when she makes up her mind to leave Raoul's organisation and go to live with the Young Man. Presumably, though the point is not clear, that decision leads to her death.

This reading of the narrative allows us to draw together certain strands in the film's pattern of devices and references. The scene in which Nana reaches her decision is the one where dialogue is suppressed in favour of sub-titles. The silent movie treatment here refers us back to the quotation from Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc* and Nana's identification with Joan. The direct parallel is that Nana, like Joan, feels herself driven by forces which she can neither oppose nor comprehend. But Dreyer's sequence also shows Joan learning of the imminence of her execution. By echoing Joan's ordeal in the scene of Nana's decision, Godard's sub-titles connect the concepts of choice and of death. This in turn creates a relevance for Brice Parain's story of Porthos the musketeer; Dumas' hero brought death upon himself when, for the first time, he contemplated his action; Godard's heroine brings death upon herself when, for the first time, she exercises her will.

However, in suggesting these interpretations I am conscious of choosing the least unlikely connections rather than of elucidating meanings developed convincingly in the film's structure. Godard's fragmented method of narrative robs us of the stable framework that we need in order to make sense of the formal pattern. (In *Les Carabiniers* and *Alphaville* the structure of fable operates similarly to convey ideas with clarity but without offering a sense of their relevance to any actual situation.) By presenting as a film a series of sketches for a film, Godard protects himself from having to make a complete statement about any of his subjects. No film-maker can be blamed for refusing to commit himself to a single line of thought. The trouble here is that Godard also evades the need to investigate any of the possibilities in depth.

Thus, while the film's greatest strength lies in its examination of a temperament, Godard's devices continually destroy context so that Nana's oscillations of mood and attitude fail to cohere into a portrait. We need, for example, a quite firm understanding of Nana's relationship with the Young Man if we are to comprehend its value for her and its relevance to the film. Yet the key scene is scarcely realized at all. Much of it is given over to the recital of a Poe story of which the meaning for the picture is, on one reading, very thin and, on another, very silly. The remainder is the sub-titled conversation; here the device stylises to such an extent that the relationship is removed from life and reality. We are left to speculate at just the point where we need to *know*.

So often, in *Vivre sa Vie*, Godard's fresh approach betrays him into following impulses that a more 'cautious' director would have abandoned as the subject began to impose its own shape and discipline. Perhaps the basic fault is Godard's unwillingness to allow the movie the degree of anonymity that a fully coherent work assumes. Instead he plays with film as he plays with ideas, very personally. Both games are conducted with passion, curiosity and elegant skill. But the context is severely limiting.

Still: Nana (Anna Karina).

LES CARABINIERS

Ian Cameron

Michel Ange (Albert Juross) and Ulysse (Marino Masè) are called up to fight for the King. Assured that they will be able to do what they want to the enemy and that they will become rich, they go off to fight and occasionally write home to their wives, Vénus (Geneviève Galéa) and Cléopatre (Catherine Ribeiro). After some years they return home with pictures of their conquests. Each receives a medal as a token of what he has earned and will receive when the war is over. Bells and fireworks mark the end of the war, but the King has lost and the country is in a state of civil war. While Michel Ange and Ulysse are searching for the King so that they can collect what they have earned, they are shown into a cellar and machine-gunned.

After some vague coughing and shuffling, the first distinct sounds that we hear in *Les Carabiniers* are of a voice saying '*Marche militaire, première fois*', followed by one muffed take and then one good one which continues under the single frame of hand-written credits. The voice is presumably that of the composer, Philippe Arthuys, but with it Godard refers to the process of film-making and reminds us that we are watching a movie, an experience not to be confused with, for example, living one's life—or anyone else's: the spectator is constantly discouraged from lapsing into the state of identification which is natural in the cinema.

After the title, we are presented with a series of fast tracking shots evidently taken from a car which is travelling down a motorway. The frequency with which the road is crossed by bridges (emphasised in the jump-cuts between shots, each of which begins with the camera going under a bridge) suggests that we are in a built-up area. However, as the road is in a

Still: Michel Ange (Albert Juross).

cutting, we cannot be sure. The sequence of shots has no apparent relationship to anything else in the film. It suggests driving out of a city—Paris, for instance.

The tiny shack where the four leading characters live is on a patch of featureless waste land, of the sort that one might expect to find on the outskirts of a city: there is a busy road nearby and pylons loom in the background (though the shack has no electricity). By the time it transpires that we are in some mythical kingdom, the audience might be forgiven for believing that it does not much matter where we are. And indeed it doesn't. Just as somewhere on the outskirts of Paris does duty as part of the kingdom, so other settings in the course of the film are described as Italy, Northern Silesia, Santa Cruz in Mexico and Rostov, when none of them looks like more than another nondescript bit of France.

First interpretation: this is an invitation to generalize—nowhere in particular at no particular time during the past few decades can be

Still: a demonstration of military power for the benefit of Ulysse (Marino Masè).

seen as everywhere at any time (the negation of the old social realist assumption that universal significance will come from treatment of a specific place and time: Godard often manages to be precise by dealing in generalities). Second interpretation, one never to be forgotten: he was working on a tiny budget and could not afford to go far. Of course, he could have selected locations which he could afford so that they were interestingly contrasted and gave some impression of the countries which they represented. So, third interpretation: he didn't want to. In doing so, he would have given to war a variety and interest, which from the viewpoint of the Other Ranks of foot-soldiers it must totally lack. Shooting hostages, for example, is an experience unlikely to change much with its setting. A fourth interpretation underlines the audience detachment induced by the monotony of the settings: we are not meant to be convinced by them. Godard is the screen's best antidote for those who wish to use the cinema as substitute experience. Far from sharing an experience, we are not even, as he constantly reminds us, watching reality but only what the director has put there for us.

Of course, the four interpretations are complementary rather than contradictory. To these one should add a fifth: Godard's antipathy towards his audiences allows him to treat them as he pleases, which is often very badly. One might say that he makes no concessions to his audiences, but that would sound like praise, and one could equally say that he sometimes appears to despise them (any traces of the fascism which some critics detect in Godard are to be found not in his political attitudes but in his treatment of the audience). But my purpose here is not evaluation. To put it in a more neutral way, Godard does not see any reason to make his films prettier or more varied or faster or slower or more watchable for the benefit of the spectator.

There are other reminders that we are spectators of a work of fiction. The actors do things which are outside the characterization of their parts (Michel Ange salutes a reproduction of a Rembrandt self-portrait—'*Un soldat salue un artiste.*'). Every now and then a few frames of black emphasize the cutting from one shot to the next—sometimes the momentary blackness may indicate a time-lapse, but Godard does not normally worry about devices to mark such transitions, and the position of the black-outs often seems quite arbitrary. Longer interruptions in the flow of the visual action come with the titles, which may sometimes advance the narrative, but which have to be read, and reading is a different activity from watching. The titles are on a black background (giving a visual link to the black-outs), and, except in the British prints where the translations are misguidedly set in type, handwritten (increasing the effort required to read them and thus emphasizing the act of reading). The writing is reminiscent of Cocteau's, and so links the film both to 'Thomas l'Imposteur' and to *Le Petit Soldat*.

The 'unconvincing' settings and characters are part of Godard's plan to prevent us from being caught up in an emotional reaction. Godard always aims to keep his audience in a state of detached awareness, but his efforts in this direction have never excluded an emotional response to the extent that they do in *Les Carabiniers*. The reaction which the film demands is completely dispassionate: we *feel* nothing except perhaps at one remove shocked at not being shocked. War is presented as an emotional zero.

Perhaps that is why *Les Carabiniers* has provoked more violently hostile reactions than any other Godard film. In denying war any emotional value, it succeeds in offending almost everyone. If it is unlikely to stir patriotic emotions in the military breast, it has just as

little to offer the devotees of the 'anti-war' film. Where is the emotional charge that is the stock-in-trade of such works? Where is the fear, the suffering, the degradation? Godard has signally failed to provide that old cathartic experience which in 'anti-war' movies is liable to burgeon into full-scale masochistic whizzo. He does not allow war the value of an emotional experience.

His treatment of the deaths is exemplary: he does not make a point of their pointlessness. The few deaths that are shown, even that of the bill-posting soldier who is stabbed in the back, are totally undramatic. People just slump down when they are shot or stabbed; these are newsreel deaths rather than acted deaths of the sort that Godard camps up in *Bande à Part* and *Made in U.S.A.* The lack of the ceremony about the deaths reduces them to the level of routine business. It is notable that the majority of the deaths shown or indicated are not battle casualties but quite gratuitous executions. No dramatic point is made of this: when the job in hand is killing, the circumstances don't much alter its acceptability. War must involve suspension of the sensibilities.

The same absence of feeling pervades the titles. Most of them represent cards sent home by Ulysse and Michel Ange; the impassive record of their professional activities is interspersed with routine pleasantries. 'A beautiful summer all the same,' says one card, and another, 'We leave behind us a trail of blood and death. With love and kisses.' Godard has defended these texts against critics whose main objection was apparently a theoretical one to recourse to the written word. To these objections, which probably masked more emotional reactions, Godard replied by quoting pedigrees: '*Le texte de ces lettres est recopié mot à mot de lettres de soldats encerclés à Stalingrad, d'une lettre d'un hussard de Napoléon pendant la campagne d'Espagne, et surtout de circulaires d'Himmler à ses divers chefs de groupes de combat . . .*' In this sense, the titles are a verbal equivalent of the stock-shots clipped from assorted newsreels, morsels of reality transformed (the standard Godard treatment) into details of his generalized, synthetic war.

The titles do very much more than interrupt the flow of the visual action: they are more active aids to detachment. Consider what might have happened if Godard had had, in the words of Michel Aubriant, 'the courage or inclination

Still: tank warfare in Les Carabiniers.

to shoot' a scene to replace a title like 'Sometimes we make people lie down on the bodies of their predecessors and we shoot them in that position'. With our peace-time sensibilities, we could hardly avoid being repelled by the scene. Our natural disgust would mark it out as a nadir in the morality of war, a really *dirty* piece of war-making. And this emotional reaction would cloud our perception and imply that some methods of killing were less acceptable than others. One cannot imagine Godard finding the idea of the decently fought war any more allowable than the virtues of the clean nuclear weapon. The titles prevent us from being distracted by our reaction to the *spectacle* of atrocities. Instead we are presented with the information that they are taking place. Because this information comes to us via the protagonists, it embodies their feeling, or rather lack of feeling, about their work. The reduction of the atrocities to prosaic titles leaves us with the impression that far from being exceptional, they are part of the routine of war.

Les Carabiniers has the quality for which some of the contributors to Cahiers du Cinéma admired Irving Lerner's *Murder by Contract*:

Stills: Michel Ange (Albert Juross) and Ulysse (Marino Masé) sample the pleasures of war. The resemblance of their victim to Shirley MacLaine is perhaps not coincidental.

it is an atonal film, which gives an equal weight to the various experiences portrayed. In Lerner's film, the professional assassin's business life is treated in the same way as his other activities. In *Les Carabiniers*, almost everything conforms to the general level of emotional emptiness, to the curious lack of involvement which characterizes such diverse activities as open-air cooking, shooting hostages, sliding along a frozen river or requisitioning apartments and shooting caretakers ('They said we could,' says Michel Ange to a passing officer).

The same atonality that covers war's unfelt horrors extends equally to its joyless pleasures. Holding a young woman at gun point, all that Michel Ange does is to lift up the hem of her skirt for a look, and, making her undress to her slip and kneel down, to 'ride' her round the room. The failure to take possession of conquests of any sort is a consistent pattern in the film: one never feels that the royal army is in

control of the territory which it occupies: there is always some anonymous figure around to plant a knife in the back of an unwary soldier.

The general illusion of gain from conquest is mirrored in the specific failure of our heroes to obtain any real rewards. This is presented in the postcard sequence, which is the film's ultimate atonality: monuments, big stores, mammals, wonders of nature, methods of transport, works of art are reduced to complete uniformity as images in the suitcase full of picture postcards brought back from the wars by Ulysse and Michel Ange. The list of conquests goes some way towards fulfilling the promises made by the soldiers who called them up at the beginning of the film. One of the soldiers had advertised the pleasures of war by providing a list, spoken with consistent lack of expression, that included an even more diverse series of items that could be taken from the enemy. Apart from embodying a dispassionate uniformity, the list implies in its selection of items like lighters, jewels and Alpha Romeos, goods that would interest a thief, that war contains an element of larceny, and in its selection of large objects calls into question the extent to which conquest is gain. How does one take a printing works or a metro station? A number of non-portable items in the list could be taken only insofar as they could be pillaged: *Prisunics*, casinos, cigar factories, goods trains. Finally, of course, both lists provide Godard with the opportunity for various comments, asides and gags.

The rewards are not the main reason why Ulysse and Michel Ange go to war: they go because they are called up. The letter from the King flatters Michel Ange, who is encouraged by the soldiers to think that the King personally wants a favour from him, although the call-up paper is a printed form. The efficacy of the document is greatly increased by the evident

power conferred on the soldiers by the possession of guns, a power which is demonstrated in the opening scuffle and which our heroes naturally covet, if only for its perquisites. They go willingly because of the promised rewards, encouraged by the cupidity of their women, who are initially more sceptical but, when convinced, set to work compiling a looting list of things they want.

Quite absent from the motives of Ulysse and Michel Ange are the feelings traditionally supposed to inspire young men fighting for King and Country. This is inherent in Godard's choice of heroes: they appear to belong to the very lowest social level of smallholding peasantry, and exist at a correspondingly low level of awareness. 'Mo-bi-li-sa-tion, what's that?' says Michel Ange, when confronted with his call-up paper. Sentiments like patriotism and idealism are outside their range: they lack the sophistication to deal with abstractions or

generalizations of any sort. To them, everything is specific and concrete. There is no idea in the film that they are fighting for their country but only for the King, for a person rather than for a nation, which is already too abstract a concept to involve them. Exactly who the King is or what he stands for is never made clear to us, for it is never clear to them.

As always in Godard movies, it is instructive to consider not just what he has included but what he has chosen to omit. Patriotism and idealism, certainly, are not to be found among the King's forces. Nor does heroism figure in the action: at the level of the cannon fodder, individual action and individual sacrifice are exceptional; we are at the level of soldiery where death is significant mainly as a statistic. And if useful heroism might stir one set of undesirable reactions in the audience, pointless heroism, a standard gambit of the 'anti-war' movie, would stir up others, equally undesirable

Stills. Left: the resistance in operation. Right: war as a picnic; Jean-Louis Comolli (second from left) as the soldier who asks if fish have souls.

in the context, because they would be emotional. Also missing from the film are strategy (which would be beyond the comprehension of our heroes) and its authors, the staff officers. In fact, officers in general make only incidental appearances. Another omission, not unconnected with the absence of officers, is of issues involving conscience either about giving orders which will result in bloodshed or about obeying them. Thus Godard avoids a whole well-explored area of liberal films about war, which involve the impact of the horrors of war on bourgeois sensibilities. Through the insensitive souls he has chosen as protagonists, Godard is able to deal with war on a uniquely brutish level. One suspects that he would anyway consider the idealism, the patriotism and the

problems of conscience as smooth edges which would quickly be roughed away.

The largest omission of all, however, is of battle scenes. If there is a reward one expects from a war film of any political colour, it is a fat piece of physical action: a fixed-bayonet, steel-helmeted, grenade-studded, artillery-bombarded, fast-tracking spree with many corpses and much noise. Godard does not deliver for a number of reasons. The budget wouldn't stand it. The battle aspect of war has been done so often and so physically in American movies that Godard can assume it. Action sequences have a physical exhilaration that would run contrary to Godard's intentions—this is not at all a physical film, with scarcely a tracking shot in it. Assuming that one does not want to make a meal of the action, the battle scene is the least interesting aspect of war, and one may do better to concentrate on the time between the battles. Godard deals with his protagonists in battle in a series of three shots, two of which are titles. Title: 'What do soldiers do before battle?' Shot of Ulysse and Michel Ange firing rifles in battle. Title: 'Before battle, soldiers are afraid.' The brevity of the sequence (and of two other desultory pieces of action) indicates that battle is only an aspect of war. It isolates the one emotion mentioned in the film and at the same time makes a Godardian point of its visual undemonstrability. Emotions in Godard tend to be referred to verbally and not demonstrated visually, an inevitable consequence, perhaps, of his methods of characterization and his use of actors as objects.

The space left by the absence of battle set-pieces is filled by a miscellany of stock-shots covering the various forms of warfare. The sequence about fear is preceded by banking aircraft and followed by marine warfare: the armies of land (Ulysse and Michel Ange), sea and air. Godard has written that his film is meant to be a child's primer on war, on all wars: '*Chaque plan, chaque séquence correspondait donc a une idée précise: l'occupation, la campagne de Russie, l'armée régulière, les partisans, etc. Ou un sentiment précis: la violence, la débandade, l'absence de passion, la dérision, le désordre, la surprise, le vide. Ou un fait, un phénomène précis: le bruit, le silence, etc.*' In this, Godard is characteristically brief—many of the sequences last at most for a few shots—and very meticulous. Never, according to Godard, did they put the sound of a Heinkel with a shot of a Spitfire or that of a Beretta with one of a Thomson sub-machine-gun. Godard's compendium of war is perfectly integrated with the high-gamma visuals of the rest of the film. None of the stock-shots obtrude through their different visual quality as they do in most war films that rely on library material. Ulysse and Michel Ange, being inventions, are not allowed to be convincing, but the newsreel material, being real, is treated with the maximum of respect, paradoxically in making it accord completely with the visual quality of the acted sequences. But, after all, both sides of the film are part of the same generalized war.

Ulysse and Michel Ange, who are not so much characters as arbitrary inventions, are the demonstration examples in Godard's primer, and like all such examples have been pruned of superfluous considerations, notably, in their case, intellect and scruple. Through them Godard is able to show very directly the anti-social urges for which war will provide an outlet. Michel Ange, perhaps the more brutish, checks with one of the soldiers that he will be allowed to do such things as smashing old people's spectacles, raping women, stealing natty trousers, massacring innocents, denouncing people and leaving restaurants without paying. He is assured that all these things will be allowed. For him and Ulysse, war is a license for banditry in the name of the King,

and so turns naturally into simple banditry when Ulysse sets about getting the money to buy a Maserati. Godard uses the license allowed to the lowest participants in the war to indicate the nature of the enterprise in which their leaders are indulging: there is banditry at all levels. The primitive barbarity of it is summarized in the idea of killing a sheep to seal the bargain before the two recruits set out. The references to religion in this and Michel Ange's question about massacring innocents are surely not coincidental.

Les Carabiniers is a series of propositions about war—it is the nearest Godard has come to making a statement movie, much closer than *Alphaville*. If a number of statements come through loud and clear from the film, each comes with a full set of qualifications and attendant paradoxes, and the various statements interact to modify each other—the propositions in *Les Carabiniers* interact in the same way as the socio-political observations in *Masculin-Féminin*.

The resultant complexity and Godard's refusal to indulge emotional reactions prevent the film degenerating into a pacifist tract. The picture of war as banditry is modified by the portrayal of the partisans, whose appearance makes us think not only about banditry but about the nature of war. In contrast to the official war raged by the King's army, the partisans operate as bandits. A couple of them attack the platoon where the men are resting: one is cooking a fish in his tin helmet and Michel Ange is posted by a sub-machine-gun as sentry. He is reading a book when the partisans attack (art versus action). The partisans fail because they do not work on the appropriate level of ruthlessness and hold Michel Ange at gunpoint instead of killing

Still: first catch your sheep.

him. The problems of the left wing in coming to terms with violence were later to become an important theme of *Made in U.S.A.*

The partisans in their civilian dress are related to the civilian hostages whose execution was supervised by Michel Ange: the girl partisan has long blonde hair and dresses like the girl hostage—they could even be played by the same person. The idea of partisan activity as the natural response of the population to military oppression recalls Charles Laughton's great speech in Renoir's *This Land Is Mine*: 'I see now that sabotage is the only weapon left for a defeated people.' The contrast between the partisan's method and morality and those of the official oppression takes in the headmaster's comment in the Renoir film that 'our heroes are called criminals . . . their criminals are called heroes.'

The 'resurrection' of the girl hostage as the partisan combines with the great difficulty in killing the reincarnation ('*Elle bouge encore . . . encore . . . encore . . .*' says Michel Ange, chewing on a stem, incredulous but unmoved, after numerous shots have been fired into her body): the indomitability of the human spirit, but also Chairman Mao's true bastion of iron, 'the masses, the millions upon millions of people who genuinely and sincerely support the revolution. That is the real iron bastion which it is impossible, absolutely impossible, for any force on earth to smash.' After the partisan sequence, the titles report defeat and surrender; only the order of events in the film links the appearance of partisans with the defeat of the King's army—the Imperialist Aggressors.

The sequence also embodies the failure of theoretical Marxism as propaganda (another connection with *Made in U.S.A.*) and implies

Still: the girl revolutionary (Odile Geoffroy) addresses her executioners as 'Brothers !'.

a connection between the over-theoretical approach and the failure of the partisans (just as it was the inflexibility of computer-organised Alphaville that would contain the seeds of its destruction). The partisan girl states didactically: '*Lénine a dit, "Le capitalisme bourgeois et les représentants de la réaction ne sont que des insectes malfaisants et doivent être considérés comme tels par les forces de prolétariat international."* ' And the soldier in command of the platoon says, 'She bores me, shoot her.'

There is also here the contrast between the convinced, justified war-making of the partisans and the operations of the King's army from which the more admirable human emotions have to be excluded: the platoon leader tells Michel Ange to drape a handkerchief over the girl's face, 'otherwise they may not shoot'. Yet they are stopped as they raise their rifles by an emotional appeal: 'Brothers!' It is not the girl's sex that makes them hesitate —her face is hidden and she is dressed in masculine clothes—it is the idea of similarity, of killing their own kind: suddenly the impersonal (and for the rest of the film largely invisible) enemy becomes disturbingly human.

A further strand in the partisan sequence concerns the power of art. Mayakovsky's admirable fable, declaimed as its author intended, produces reactions in the soldiers that Lenin's dictum failed to elicit. We see the band of executioners gratified by the images of war as an unreal game: 'Someone just ordered this carnival for his pleasure, someone invented this game . . . no-one has been killed . . . simply lain down to sleep.' (This refers back to the quote from Borges which prefaces the film.) The cruel irony, reinforced by the fact that the words are spoken by a girl faced with the immediate prospect of her own death, passes un-noticed by the soldiers who react only to the images that attract them: implied comments on art and its audience emerge from their incomplete appreciation of the fable.

The other major appearance of art in the film is Michel Ange's first visit to a cinema, a pivotal sequence which occurs almost exactly half way through. Coming between two sections of the film depicting Ulysse and Michel Ange participating in the war without conviction or emotional involvement, we are shown Michel Ange confronted with an experience which involves him emotionally and in which he wishes in vain to participate.

His reactions to the appearances on the screen are much more animated than his reactions to the realities of war. They heighten the lack of emotion displayed in the war sequences by showing his ability to react, albeit on a pretty rudimentary level. The open, humorous feeling of this sequence (the only night sequence in the film) in its contrast to the rest of the film provides further corroboration of the underlying general principle that lack of emotion is a prerequisite for the rank and file in old-fashioned imperialist warfare. The town, Santa Cruz, and the name of the cinema, Le Mexico, remind us of another idea—the cinema as an escape—Godard uses Latin America in both *Le Petit Soldat* and *Bande à Part* as the destination for flights from ugly realities, a place to which the characters cannot be pursued.

Godard takes the occasion of Michel Ange's first visit to a cinema as the opportunity to remind us of the range of time over which he is generalizing in *Les Carabiniers*. The first two films shown are of a train arriving at a station and of an infant's feeding time degenerating into food-throwing slapstick. These were two items from the original Lumière programme and Michel Ange reacts as a primitive man confronted for the first time with (appropriately) primitive films: when the train comes into the station, towards the

Still: Michel Ange at the cinema; he rises from the wreckage of the screen.

audience, he covers his face in fright—the frequently reported behaviour of early movie audiences. The complete belief in appearances as reality links with the postcard sequence and other moments in the film when the often illusory appearance of possession is transmuted into possession of appearance.

But the film is not set in 1895 and the films are not those made by the Lumières, but recreations of them by Godard. The silent movie piano music is interrupted by the train whistle and the feeding scene has dialogue including a quote about Superboy and the father curses his disobedient child as a little fascist whore. Although the recreations are overtly in homage to the Lumières, they are reminders that Godard is an admirer of Méliès, who used to make newsreels by setting up the events like the coronation of Edward VII in his studio. Godard recreating something or conversely transforming real Paris into imaginary Alphaville or Atlantic City adds a personal component in making us aware of his methods.

The third offering in the cinema is a modern version of another early cinema piece: the *femme du monde* getting into her bath. Godard shows Michel Ange's behaviour in meticulous detail. When the woman goes off-screen left, he moves to the right in order to see round the edge of the frame. When she crosses the screen and disappears to the right to fetch the bath salts, he goes back to the left. When she sits down in the bath, he cranes up to see over the edge, then climbs on the stage in front of the screen and jumps in the air. He tries feeling the surface of the screen and finally falls through it, pulling it down with him. The sequence combines a comment on the unsatisfactoriness of cinema as voyeurism, Michel Ange's refusal to accept its limitations and, again, his acceptance of the photographic image, appearance, as reality. When they return from the war, he and Ulysse are not dissatisfied with their pictorial conquests, although the Parthenon is in too bad condition to be kept and will be given to a friend who is a builder and will be able to fix it.

The end of the war, signalled by fireworks in negative as they indicate defeat instead of victory, allows Godard to present a brief primer on civil war with various details of looting, propaganda, executions, shearing of women's hair. The same pair of soldiers who recruited Ulysse and Michel Ange wear the

new symbol of a black cross on a white background, the negative of its predecessor. One explains that the war is lost and that the victors have demanded the death of the Prime Minister and the punishment of traitors and war-criminals. The army has changed its markings, presumably thus dissociating itself from war crimes. Our heroes, who have become inconvenient as they search for the King and their cash reward, and anyway wear the wrong markings, are led into a cellar and shot. Their deaths are as arbitrary and as useless as any of the others indicated in the film and have as little emotional impact.

Like other Godard films, *Les Carabiniers* does not lend itself to complete critical analysis even in an extended article. This is inherent in his method and in the shape of his films. One tends to treat works of art in criticism as though they were somehow encysted, as if one could analyze the contents of the cyst and know everything about it. Many 'traditional' works of art are sufficiently self-contained to encourage this approach. But Godard quite consciously encourages the spores of his art to germinate so that each film spreads out like a fungal mycelium from its narrative centre in a great weft of diverging but interconnecting strands that reach out to areas far beyond the immediate concerns of the film but nevertheless quite intentionally covered by it. If one seems to deal with a Godard movie by treating a few of its shots and a small fraction of its words, it is because Godard's work is full of images whose multivalency of meaning would justify calling them poetic—perhaps the only allowable use of the word with respect to the cinema. In this sense, *Les Carabiniers* is Godard at his most poetic, without any lapses into the would-be poetry of Godardian verbiage.

Still: the last moments of Ulysse and Michel Ange.

LE MEPRIS

Jose Luis Guarner

Paul Javal (Michel Piccoli) is working on the script of a version of 'The Odyssey' which is being directed by Fritz Lang for producer Jeremiah Prokosh (Jack Palance). Paul and his wife become increasingly estranged, but she goes with him when the unit moves to Capri. She catches him making advances to Prokosh's secretary (Georgia Moll); later she allows him to see her kissing Prokosh. Paul announces that he is leaving the film, but Camille goes first, driving back to Rome with Prokosh. The two are killed in a car crash. Lang goes on to complete the film.

In a spacious yard, filled with sunshine, a camera tracks forward. As Raoul Coutard turns the lens towards us, the credits (spoken, like those of *The Magnificent Ambersons*) end and we hear the words of André Bazin: '*Le cinéma substitue à notre regard un monde qui s'accorde à nos désirs.*' This extremely concise prologue, which presents filming almost as a rite taking place before us, admirably expresses one of the features of *Le Mépris* which is always present in Godard's films—the struggle between reality and cinema.

Not without a certain irony, the first scene of *Le Mépris* makes us voyeurs: we watch a long love scene (a love which shows not in gestures but in words) between Paul Javal (Michel Piccoli) and his wife Camille (Brigitte Bardot). They lie apart on a bed—we never see them embracing or kissing each other in the film, except in a flashback after their separation at Capri. In this first scene, the dialogue, spoken with painful seriousness, is a tense and melancholy declaration of love that Paul repeats as Camille asks him to. But in spite of her total nudity, there is no sensuality about the scene, only a controlled sadness—an almost pure emotion. Godard is generally considered as a cold and intellectual film maker who likes to remain aloof from the public, so that they adopt a reflective attitude towards his films. However, this attitude allows him (as it does Rossellini) to induce emotions which do not call on the latent sentimentality of the spectator. The first scene of *Vivre sa Vie* was already typical. Paul and Nana argue for a long time with their backs to the camera, a cold distant camera which removes all sense of drama: in this apparently dull and meaningless scene Nana's gesture of caressing Paul's neck (still with her back to the camera) moves one with real tenderness. The beginning of *Le Mépris* is very similar. Like Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia*, it gives us the sensation of discovering lives that existed before the film. The quality is even more outstanding as the scene was insisted upon by Joseph E. Levine. With his cool sense of humour, Godard, in spite of an apparent concession, could both remain faithful to the spirit of his work and satisfy the producer of the film and '*ces cochons de payants*'.

Le Mépris is made with limited resources: out of a minimal incident (a misunderstanding) emerges the inexorable mechanism of tragedy. Paul thinks that Camille despises him because she believes that he has tried to force her into the arms of the producer, Jeremiah Prokosh (Jack Palance), for whom he is rewriting the script of *The Odyssey*, which is being shot by

Fritz Lang. Paul's clumsiness in trying to justify his attitude finally provokes her real contempt. What appeared in Moravia's novel as a bourgeois melodrama has been transformed by Godard into a modern tragedy by means of an 'epic' presentation of characters and a peculiar dramatic construction that operates simultaneously at several levels, the interaction of which creates resonances that enrich the meaning of the story.

The first appearance of Prokosh in the film is typical of Godard's point of view: in a yard at Cinecittà he strolls along a ramp, a real theatrical stage where the character plays his part. He replies to Paul with quotations from a tiny Bible which he always carries with him. The quotations are translated by Francesca (Georgia Moll), a mysterious secretary who follows him everywhere like a little dog. Then we observe his sense of humour in the small projection room, under the screen of which are inscribed the words of Louis Lumière: '*La cinema è una invenzione senza avvenire.*' When he watches the shots of a mermaid, when he throws a reel of film across the room with the improbable motions of a discus-thrower, when

he uses Francesca's back for signing a cheque, when he habitually ends questions with a brutal 'yes or no', all the details add up to a shrewd caricature of a film producer. Godard has commented that 'they are like this in real life'. The choice of Jack Palance, a heavy *par excellence*, speaks for itself: he has to play the villain of the piece, but with a certain nobility. Fritz Lang, beautifully played by himself, is the perfect antithesis: the living symbol of cinema, he watches life through his monocle, with an almost superhuman understanding of events (his quotation of the enigmatic poem by Hölderlin), overcoming his incidental humiliation in front of the producer (greatness and servitude of cinema) with an Olympian irony. Prokosh and Lang present an idealistic and at the same time realistic view of the film world: what we might call epic documentary.

Paul and Camille, for their part, represent the world of people, of day-to-day life. In contrast to the theatrical attitude of Prokosh, Paul makes an unconvincing attempt to be the *blasé* intellectual who is lowering himself to earn a living in films. He knows and appreciates good films (*King of Kings*, *Rancho Notorious*, etc.) but collaborates on others like *Totò contro Ercole*. Underneath he is a big frustrated boy (like Michel Poiccard, Bruno Forestier, Ferdi-

Photograph: Brigitte Bardot and Michel Piccoli who play Camille and Paul Javal.

nand Griffon and so many other Godard characters) who tries to hide the failure of his aspiration to write for the theatre by means of a fictitious personality, made up of imitations, frequently from movie stars. He always wears a hat like Dean Martin in *Some Came Running*, and acquires, perhaps unconsciously, the air of a gangster in an American film—all of which stresses even more. the vulnerability of his character. Halfway between fantasy and reality, always ready to explain everything to himself or others, unable to overcome his impulses (his sly caresses of Francesca), he never succeeds in adapting himself to a normal sequence of events. Godard has maliciously underlined his instability by juxtaposing Paul's abrupt exits and his smooth entrances (at the apartment in Rome and at the villa in Capri). In Godard's comments on the script, he was described as 'a character from *Marienbad* who wants to play the role of a character in *Rio Bravo*.'

Camille is perhaps the most brilliant result of Godard's *parti-pris* of having the characters not played but symbolized by the actors. Conscious of Brigitte Bardot's limitations, he has avoided adapting the character of Camille to the personal legend of B.B. and has tried the opposite course, starting from the fact that it is B.B. who plays Camille. The formula had already been sketched in *Vivre sa Vie* which can be considered as a documentary about Anna Karina playing the role of a prostitute. During the course of *Le Mépris*, we never forget that we are seeing B.B. and not Camille, but we soon grow accustomed to it: we accept her acting just as we accept that Palance 'is' Prokosh and Lang 'is' Lang. This remarkable concept of directing actors is, in my view, one of the most original elements in *Le Mépris*. Compared with the other characters in the film, Camille-Brigitte Bardot adopts a more enigmatic and irreversible personality. Her reactions are more physiological than rational, as she doesn't try to dominate reality like Paul, but simply to live it. It is the relative simplicity of her reactions that starts the drama. There appear to be three factors that cause Camille's attitude to her husband: the apparent indifference which makes her leave the studio in Prokosh's car, his clumsy justification of being late at the producer's house (as if he intended to offer her to Prokosh in order to consolidate his position) and her catching him in a momentary caress with Francesca. Maybe, in any case, it is too little to justify her extreme attitude. But, as Godard would say, '*les femmes font comme ça . . .*', and on the other hand, these three factors are only catalysts which help to show Camille Paul's behaviour in a different light.

The nature of the conflict is expressed almost physically in the long scene in their apartment, an extension of the struggle between Michel and Patricia in *A Bout de Souffle*. Paul tries to play before Camille the same role as Patricia Leacock before the Escroc or Godard before the reality he is filming. The décor, deliberately reduced to what is essential (a half-furnished apartment, a very simple palette in which white predominates), focuses all our interest on the faces and feelings of the characters. The painful insecurity which appears little by little in this confrontation as almost intolerable, comes not only from the consciousness of an increasing lack of communication (which Godard expresses very well through the frustrating movements of the characters who come in and out constantly without ever meeting face to face), but from the increasing inscrutability of Camille's face. It was the same disquiet that made Godard write eleven years before filming *Le Mépris*, when he was Hans Lucas: 'Cinema does not enquire about a woman's beauty, it only casts doubts about her heart, it records her perfidy . . . it only watches her movements'. This moment of *Le*

Still: Camille and Jeremiah Prokosh as Paul sees them in the window of the house in Capri.

Mépris is surely the best expression achieved by Godard of a motif which reappears with obsessive constancy in his work, one of the essential paradoxes of cinema: there is no more accurate reality that the reality of appearances, but recording them is not enough to reveal the secret hidden behind them.

Paul's unreasonable fear of his wife's contempt moves him to watch her with the greatest attention in order to discover what she really thinks of him. His uneasiness grows progressively as he realises the impossibility of interpreting beyond her words the simplest feelings shown in Camille's face. When she smiles sadly at him, he asks anxiously 'It it a mocking smile or a smile of tenderness?' This

is the most beautiful moment of the film. The sudden appearance of Camille with a black wig, which changes her startlingly, makes Paul understand how ridiculous his enquiry was, even from an external, physical point of view. There lies the reason for his abrupt reaction in slapping his wife (implicitly confessing his impotence) when she reminds him of the inconsistency of his attitude towards Prokosh. The tension culminates in an interrogation, shown in an anxious shot that pans backwards and forwards between Paul and Camille, who is alternately switching a lamp on and off.

Paul's insistence will finally be fatal to him: his lack of self-confidence and his lack of confidence in his wife provoke her real contempt. The slow modulations of this admirable scene take up almost a third of the film, and are interrupted only by a few brief shots in which Paul evokes Camille's body. These were forced into the film by Levine and are shown in purest Playboy style. In this scene, Godard has been able to pick on the exact moment of the breakdown of a marriage (one of the most beautiful and dramatic that can be offered for the attention of the cinema-goer), the end of a love. He shows it with an extreme stylization which does not, however, exclude emotion. Through a matrimonial dispute he evokes, not only the eternal conflict between Man and Woman, but also, with great economy of resources, the conflict between reality and fantasy, between life and cinema.

But this is only one of the significant levels of *Le Mépris*. From the beginning, a series of beautiful images from *The Odyssey* are integrated into the action: men and women in statuesque attitudes representing Ulysses, Penelope, Antinous, Neptune. This is not, however, a film within a film. (*The Odyssey* being shot by Fritz Lang). The recurrence of these images isolated in space and time suggests the presence of a parallel universe intruding into the reality. The images do not imply that the ancients can influence the behaviour of human beings, as in *Viaggio in Italia* (a showing of Rossellini's film is watched by the main characters of *Le Mépris*). There the petrified lovers found in the ruins of Pompeii play an important role in the relationship between Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders. Godard tries to show the opposition between two different ways of understanding life. The ancients knew how to live in complete harmony with nature (as Lang explains), accepting reality as it is, objectively. Paul and Camille, brought back to nature on their trip to Capri, sink even further into their opposition. Camille allows Prokosh to kiss her: we do not know whether it is because she has stopped loving Paul or because she wants to prove this to herself, or even in order to provoke him to react when he witnesses the scene. Maybe it is because of all these factors. Paul defends to Lang Prokosh's idea of changing 'The Odyssey' into a modern story, in which he sees naïvely a reflection of his own personal drama. Then he does the contrary, explaining to Prokosh that Lang is right and that his view of 'The Odyssey' is the right one. Paul tries to regain his wife's esteem by giving up the job of rewriting the script to conform with Prokosh's ideas. He is made to realize his mistake when Prokosh replies laconically to Paul in the presence of all the others (Camille, Lang, Francesca) that the world of 'The Odyssey' is today beyond the reach of men.

The conflict between Paul and Camille acquires a cosmic dimension framed in a natural setting that is as marvellous as it is unchanging. In order to strengthen this sensation, Godard sets their last meeting on the terrace of the villa, an extraordinary building surrounded by rocks and the sea which becomes the ritual setting of tragedy. '*J'ai l'impression que je te vois pour la première fois*,' Paul says as he watches his wife basking in the sun. Paul embodies the tragic

contradictions of Godard's world: he wants to live in harmony with reality, like the ancients, but without participating in it, without absorbing it fully, in the passive attitude of a spectator watching a film. The most tragic side of Godard's cinema is that it expresses explicitly that the possibility of participation is merely relative: the intervention of Michel Ange in a film he watches in *Les Carabiniers* is catastrophic as it destroys the illusion. Paul's last effort to explain things to Camille only makes the gap between them more unbridgeable.

The impossibility of any communication is usually resolved in Godard's films by death. Camille abandons Paul and goes back to Rome with Prokosh, leaving a farewell letter to her husband, but on the way, their car is wrecked by a lorry. This sequence is treated in an almost purely musical way. After a short stop at a service station, during which Camille shows that she intends to sever her relations with Prokosh and go back to her former job as a typist, the car departs for the encounter with death. This image alternates with fragments from Camille's letter. The solemn, parallel rhythm of the tracking shots, which seem to caress the words written by Camille, and her body covered with blood in the smashed car, invoke the pitiless course of fate with the 'inexorable sweetness' of Mizoguchi's films.

The rhythm of this movement goes on symmetrically in the tracking shots which accompany Paul as he climbs to the villa (truly the way to Olympus). On the terrace, Lang is preparing to shoot a scene for his film. Lang is the most lucid character in the film and the sole winner: he manages to complete his film in the way he wishes. Life goes on and Paul, after his sad experience, will have to learn 'how not to be bitter', like Bruno Forestier in *Le Petit Soldat*. The act of filming once more takes on a ceremonial significance: Lang's assistant, Godard himself, calls for silence before filming a shot of Ulysses looking at the sea, which ends *Le Mépris* on a complete identification of life with nature, of reality with cinema. This ending completes the circular structure of *Le Mépris*.

Of all Godard's films it is the least based upon references, and gets its mysterious life from very simple elements: a linear plot, stylized characters that turn almost into archetypes. It is a film without 'cinematic ideas'. Throughout, his ideas are about construction and about direction of actors. The film consists of long shots that reproduce reality as it is, without recourse to montage. Nevertheless, it is the Godard film in which the cinema emerges with the most majestic presence. If the plot is very simple, the constant superimposition of its various structures (a story of the disintegration of a marriage, an epic documentary about the world of cinema, an essay about the essence of cinema, some comments about the position of the film maker, a meditation on two different ways of seeing life, etc.) creates a set of interrelations which in the end attains a disconcerting complexity and defeats any attempt at analysis. Whatever point of view one adopts, *Le Mépris* appears as compact as a diamond. Although it is a hopeless tragedy (which paradoxically takes place in a world full of light and sunshine), it adds to the anguish a certain serenity which had not existed before in Godard's work, a more mature way of seeing things.

This game of oppositions which continually complement each other could go on for a long time. It is the irrefutable proof of Godard's extraordinary skill in mixing totally different elements, achieving a sort of 'assemblage' that is probably unprecedented in the history of cinema. Perhaps the most appropriate picture of *Le Mépris* comes in a statement by Godard, in which, almost paradoxically, the irony is obvious: '*C'est un film simple sur des choses compliquées . . .*'

BANDE A PART

Robin Wood

Odile (Anna Karina) has told Franz (Sami Frey), a fellow student at language school, that M. Stolz, a mysterious lodger with her aunt and guardian Mme Victoria keeps a large amount of money in his room. Franz and his friend Arthur (Claude Brasseur) plan to rob the house and persuade Odile to cooperate. Arthur's criminal relatives hear of the job and want to take over. The robbery committed by Arthur and Franz becomes a tragic farce. Mme Victoria seems to have been suffocated by her gag. They finally get into the room and find the money gone. As they are leaving, Arthur goes back and discovers it in a dog's kennel, only to be shot when his relatives arrive. After the felons have departed, Stolz returns and is greeted by an unscathed Mme Victoria. Odile and Franz take a boat to South America.

Godard's films seem to me to raise acute critical problems which have not, to my knowledge, so far been discussed in print with sufficient honesty and rigour. For example, there is the recurrent obscurity: one finds on all sides a conspiracy of pretence that it doesn't exist, with

Still: Arthur (Claude Brasseur) mimes the death of Billy the Kid.

the result that now no one dares admit he finds parts of nearly all Godard's films obscure. And so the difficulties are ignored or evaded, the critics write about those parts of the films that they understand, and try to bluff their way out of difficulties they *cannot* ignore by offering glib explanations with a show of confidence intended (whether consciously or not) to deflect the reader from pursuing awkward questions further. Has anyone for example, found an explanation for the *Danger-Ange*, *Rêves-Eve* signs in *Une Femme Mariée* that justifies the obtrusive portentousness of their presentation?

And then there is the textual unevenness of the films: the way in which passages of great complexity and denseness exist side by side with passages whose significance and intrinsic interest strike one as thin in the extreme. I think the obscurity and the thinness often coincide. Indeed, at times the impression of thinness tricks the spectator into assuming an obscurity when it does not exist. In the context of so many rich and fully realized passages, he tends to tell himself that some effect of very meagre interest *must* mean more than is apparent.

Two main factors and their interaction underlie these problems, and, although they are very obvious and elementary, they are so fundamental to Godard's work that one cannot possibly ignore them if one is to discuss it at all centrally. First, there is Godard's method of working: he makes his films very quickly and spontaneously, with a great deal of improvisation, inventing scenes and developments as he goes along, using materials and accidents that present themselves, instead of working strictly from a detailed script. So much one could deduce easily enough from the films themselves; the widespread assumption that each film is an organism, every episode and detail of which stands up to the same demand for strict relevance, strikes me as very curious. The breadth of Godard's invention is extraordinary. The creative fertility which is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the very greatest artists is certainly his also. But facility can easily, almost imperceptibly, merge into facileness, so that it is very difficult to mark the border line, and the artist who relies on his powers of spontaneous invention to carry him through runs the risk—especially if he is a film maker, with pressures of schedule and budget to contend with—of passing through periods where the creative intensity is relatively slack, with resulting passages of thinness and loose relevance.

The second factor is Godard's Brechtian bent, his pervasive use of distanciation effects. The official function of the Brechtian alienation effect is to keep the audience sufficiently detached emotionally (*not* indifferent or frigid) for them to be able all the time to analyse the implications of the action and reflect on them. One can argue readily enough that it often serves this purpose admirably in Godard's films. The delayed-action effect of *Les Carabiniers*, for example, is for many people more deeply disturbing than that of any other war film, because the emotional detachment forced on the spectator makes him better able to absorb the film's horrifying implications, and also because the terrible despair underlying the film is so fundamental, with its roots in much more than war. This account, however, is far from explaining the whole function of distanciation in Godard. Indeed, no amount of detachment is going to help the great majority of spectators (among whom I humbly include myself) to keep up analytically with the apparently illogical and arbitrary shifts and jumps of many of Godard's films—frequently, in my experience, one is several analytical steps behind, and can hope, at best, only to work out some sort of an explanation for oneself afterwards. And then with failures of memory and

the absence of the bits one has missed, trying to puzzle out the significance of something that happened five minutes before can lead to some very unsatisfactory solutions.

Much more, distanciation in Godard is a means to freedom: Jack Godard, slayer of the giant of naturalism and freer of the world of cinema from its tyranny. The essence of Brechtian alienation is that it keeps you aware you are watching a play (or a film), not real life. Thus, ten minutes after the start of *Bande à Part*, Godard's voice on the sound track announces 'A few hints for late comers . . .' and gives us a not-very-helpful plot summary. Later, when Franz suggests a one minute silence, Godard doesn't simply have the characters stop talking, he switches off the whole sound track, thereby automatically drawing the audience's attention to it. If you don't let the spectators forget they're watching a film, then you are no longer under any obligation to convince them by means of narrative continuity or logical character-development. 'You are looking at the images cast by a strip of printed celluloid passing through a projector. See, I jump-cut. See, I have my characters address the audience. See, I print sub-titles for the script. See, I switch the whole thing into negative.' The giant was given a few good stabs in *A Bout de Souffle*; he is still struggling for breath in *Bande à Part*; perhaps he isn't dealt the final death-blow until *Made in U.S.A.*, but he is already mortally wounded.

The freedom gained is exhilarating; the trouble is that it leaves you in some respects a bit dazed and bewildered. If you are no longer bound by any of the traditional principles of organisation, then what replaces them as a means of preventing your film from falling into chaos? *Thematic* relevances, presumably: the

Still: Odile (Anna Karina) and Arthur (Claude Brasseur).

organisation of all the heterogeneous elements around some central thematic nucleus. Alternatively, some unifying atmosphere or mood to which all the parts relate even if they don't directly express it. It is broadly true, I think, that each Godard film is a world of its own, a distinctive unit within the larger world of the whole *oeuvre*, also highly distinctive, its character modified or developed by the addition of each new unit as film follows film. It is also broadly true that the details of each film can be related more or less convincingly to a central thematic nucleus. The freedom and the slaughter of the giant largely justify themselves. Yet there are dangers, and Godard doesn't always avoid them. To be free to do what you like is to be free to be facile and self-indulgent. Add a critical environment divided between unreflecting antagonism and indiscriminate adulation based on the assumption that anything Godard does is necessarily interesting because *he* is doing it, and it becomes surprising that he doesn't lapse more often into the near-doodling that disfigures several of his films.

Bande à Part, though in some respects a minor work (it has the air of making far more modest claims for itself than, for example, *Une Femme Mariée* or *Alphaville*), is among the most immediately and completely acceptable of his works; so much so that to explain what I mean by that 'facile and self-indulgent', I am forced to trespass on someone else's property. Consider in *Vivre sa Vie* the discrepancy between the ostensible and the actually realised function of the young man who reads Nana the Poe story and tries to persuade her to establish a permanent relationship with him. Isn't it clear that the overthrow of naturalism becomes here a mere excuse for not realising the character and the episode in any depth, so that all we have is the sketchiest gesture towards significance ? Here Godard's customary brilliant economy degenerates into visual parsimony : nothing of consequence is realized in visual terms. 'But that', Godard's adulators will tell me, 'is to make you concentrate on the words.' Very well; but what are the words ? Poe's story of the artist whose beloved died as he completed her portrait. It has no bearing whatever on the young man who reads it to Nana, or, as far as one can see, on their relationship, which hasn't been meaningfully defined. It is of course, as we have been told so often, Godard's own personal comment: his voice reads the story, the film is his 'portrait' of Karina. And this is supposed to justify its presence. The fact that it is meaningless in its immediate dramatic context, and an extraneous interference in the flow of the film, that to see anything in it at all one must 'read in' a private relationship between director and star, seems not to have bothered anybody.

In the murk of the foregoing remarks, I want to grope my way through some sequences of *Bande à Part*. It is, I have suggested, in certain respects a half-way film. Godard's early works, revolutionary as they appeared at the time, are still traditional in their method of organisation: one can discuss *A Bout de Souffle* and *Le Petit Soldat* fairly satisfactorily in terms of plot—and character—development, of the motivation and consequences of actions, although I am not suggesting that this is the *only* way in which one can discuss them. In more recent films, such an approach has become increasingly difficult and increasingly unhelpful: in *Made in U.S.A.* 'plot' and 'character' have almost ceased to exist, and even in *Une Femme Mariée* we can see the process of Godard's systematic destruction of the tyranny of plot at a fairly advanced stage—the plot line still holds, but it is already little more than a pretext for a collage of episodes, dialogues, monologues, etc. *Bande à Part* is firmly founded on a coherent action whose working out is still fairly central to the signifi-

cance of the film (more so, indeed, in this film than in some of its predecessors), but the collage technique of juxtaposition and interpolation is already plainly visible, for instance in the dance in the café, in the scene in the Métro (with Odile's song), in the two stories Franz tells, in the run through the Louvre, in the inter-cutting of Odile's run to meet the men and their exchange of real or invented sensational news stories. All of these are more or less assimilated into the plot line (they run through the Louvre to pass the time until the robbery; Odile's song in the train constitutes a moment of insight, of self-resolution; etc.), but none is necessary to it and few are closely relevant to it: one is encouraged to look for thematic rather than narrative connections. Stylistically and structurally the film is built on two tensions which characterize all of Godard's work, but the opposing pulls in each here find an unique balance: the tension between traditional narrative and what I have called collage, and the tension between naturalism and stylization, both pushed to extremes.

Still: the dance in the café.

Still: the English lesson—the teacher (Chantal Derget) and Arthur (Claude Brasseur).

The English lesson seems particularly to offer itself to detailed analysis: most people, I suppose, would judge it a completely successful sequence, and it is a point where most of the film's major stylistic and thematic features come together in a satisfying unity. There is, first, the co-existence of different emotional levels, producing a strikingly complex overall effect. The scene is sometimes very funny (the elderly student's surreptitious whisky-drinking, his abruptly opportunistic stroking of the teacher's buttocks as he passes her), sometimes very touching (Odile's response to Arthur's note telling her that her hair-style is old-fashioned), in quick succession, and more often both together (Arthur's reason, offered with disarming straightforwardness, for keeping his overcoat on: his jacket is at the cleaners and he has no money). On one level, the scene works beautifully in terms of classical *mise-en-scène*, with a carefully preserved balance of interest and sympathy between Odile, Franz and Arthur evoking a complex response from the spectator and realized with a delicate exactness of touch and a characteristic economy, in terms of gesture, movement, facial expression, exchanged glances. We see Odile's childlike vulnerability, Arthur putting into action his cynical attempt at seducing her, Franz's anxiety; a shot of Arthur's face at a moment when Odile isn't looking at him shows us the real need of her he conceals beneath his show of toughness. But the development of relationships in traditional naturalistic terms is only one aspect of the scene. It is placed and distanced, put in an entirely new perspective, by an equally firmly realised stylization. In naturalistic terms the lesson is preposterous. The teacher delivers passages from 'Romeo

and Juliet' in French, demanding that what appear to be near-beginners re-translate them into (Shakespearean?) English at dictation speed. The extreme daring of this clash between two manners achieves a valid and fruitful distanciation, creating in the spectator a more delicate and responsive awareness of the scene's differing—conflicting but interacting—currents. The nature of the lesson, and the class's relationship to it, introduces one of Godard's central and recurring concerns.

There is a masterly aural/visual counterpointing of passages from the play and shots of the characters. On a simple level we have the obvious ironic contrast of Arthur and Odile with Romeo and Juliet, representing pure, ideal, eternal romantic love—they 'couldn't live without each other', as Patricia in *A Bout de Souffle* reproachfully tells Michel Poiccard with involved though unconscious irony, for it is *he* who can't live without *her*. Odile may remind us of Juliet, but Arthur, on the surface tough, cynical and boorish, is far removed from Romeo. On a deeper level there is not contrast but similarity—like Michel Poiccard, Arthur's deepest need (though he is less conscious of it than Michel) is for some permanent relationship, to give shape and purpose to his existence: close-ups of him and Odile stealing glances at each other poignantly and comically coincide with the line about 'star-crossed lovers'. Arthur slips Odile an un-Romeo-like note—'Tou be ou not tou be contre votre poitrine, it is ze question.' He is not much like Hamlet either, yet, like Hamlet, he feels himself an outcast from the society in which he lives, and, if he is not contemplating suicide, he is moving steadily throughout the film towards his own destruction (just as any relationship between him and Odile, if not exactly 'star-crossed', is clearly doomed). The characteristic Godard hero cuts himself off from modern society and gradually discovers (with varying degrees of consciousness, Arthur's being the lowest, Pierrot-Ferdinand's the highest, Michel Poiccard's somewhere between the two) that by so doing, he has involved himself in a process of inevitable self-destruction; he fails to discover any viable substitute for the social framework he has rejected. The tragic nature of Godard's work arises from his simultaneous sympathy with this rejection and rigorously honest and unafraid confronting of its consequences. The cultural tradition (represented in the scene in question by Shakespeare, Hardy, Eliot) is potentially relevant to Arthur, yet he is completely isolated from it. The teacher's statement that today the pupils don't need to know practical things like how to ask the way and order meals, '. . . today we must know how to spell Thomas Hardy', is both true and ridiculous. The sense of cultural dislocation, of unbridgeable gulfs between the students and the literary content of the lesson, is intensified by having the teacher declaim, with increasing passionate involvement, unconnected chunks of the play, starting from near the end and mostly working backwards.

This is Godard working at full pressure: the scene has an impressive multi-dimensional density without any sacrifice of spontaneity or invention. And much of the film works on this level. But there are also passages where doubts creep in, to greater or lesser degrees: passages altogether looser in their relation to any central themes, with that combined effect of obscurity and meagreness I stressed earlier. One aspect of the collage-technique that I always find slightly suspect—though the degree of acceptability varies a lot from example to example—is Godard's fondness for having his characters deliver themselves of stories or monologues. Even with the brilliant Raymond Devos monologue in *Pierrot le Fou* (which one would certainly not want to be without) one is left

asking awkward questions: isn't its relevance to the film's concerns too loose to justify the prominence Godard allows it? How many of us really *feel* it (as opposed to working out intellectual justifications afterwards) as a significant part of the whole, and not as extraneous? The two stories told by Franz in *Bande à Part* are other cases in point; they are less obtrusive, because they occupy far less time, but also because they are intrinsically less interesting. The Jack London story: has it really any relevance to the themes or appropriateness to the speaker at that point? One can, if pressed, invent explanations for its presence, but they don't satisfy one of its necessity. The story that Franz tells in the car, about the man who can't remember his hotel-room number, seems an even more dispensable intrusion. One could argue that the story needn't have any significance, that Godard is showing us Franz telling it to pass the time during the tense waiting-period before the attempted burglary; but a story at once so precise and so enigmatic attracts far too much attention to itself to serve such a loose purpose satisfactorily. The same objection can be made to another possible justification: that no film works on the same level of intensity *all* the time, that there must be periods of relative relaxation. In a naturalistic film, periods of slackened tension fall easily into place without offending our sense of relevance; the stories are too obtrusive in their obscurity of purpose to be acceptable as equivalent to these. They are not *incompatible* with Franz or the situation; one simply has the feeling that twenty other things would have done as well. Why, then, are the stories there? Either Godard has (or thinks he has) some esoteric justification that has escaped me, or he likes them, they occurred to him, so in they went. I incline to the latter explanation: it tallies so well with all one knows or deduces about Godard's methods of working. If I am right, this suggests a striking failure of self-criticism, such as might well be encouraged by the general adulation with which Godard seems to be immediately surrounded in France. And the dangerous, if in many ways rewarding, freedom won by the undermining of naturalistic conventions and expectations allows Godard to get away with it. Our intermittent sense of obscurities in Godard may be to this extent illusory: we may be looking for meanings that aren't there, for significance where there is only weakness.

Bande à Part is sufficiently successful for such relatively thin passages to constitute no more than passing irritations. The 'advanced' work of modern painters often only finds wide acceptance when the artist has proved that he can acquit himself honourably in 'traditional'

Still: Arthur (Claude Brasseur) and his uncle (Ernest Menzer).

modes, demonstrating his mastery of the technical basis of his art in manners sanctioned by tradition. Godard passes this test magnificently, and nowhere more than in *Bande à Part*. In scene after scene, the marvellous rightness of touch in the *mise-en-scène* proves that Godard could make a completely successful work in the traditional 'naturalistic' manner, with everything essential expressed through action, gesture, expression: it is an aspect of his art that tends to get ignored in the rush to 'explain' the more 'advanced' features. Consider the beautiful economy and sureness in the presentation of Odile, a character in many ways quite unlike the sort of protagonist we have come to associate with Godard, yet entirely understood and handled with sympathy, insight and tenderness. Godard finds such simple ways of expressing the essence of the character. There are the shots of her cycling along back-alleys, making exaggerated hand-signals at turns. There is no one else in sight: the use of long-shot intensifies our sense of her isolation and vulnerability. The determined way in which she stretches out her arm to full-length suggests the conscious anxiety to conform, to do all the things she ought to do, at the very time when we feel this being undermined by the temptation to rob her aunt's house, a temptation which, though the men bring it to full consciousness, has its initial impulse within Odile herself. There is the little scene between her and Arthur on the stairs outside the classroom. She tells him she had thought of being a nurse, but couldn't bear the contact with suffering. He tells her what *he* would have done in her place: found a rich old man, become indispensable, helped him to die, and inherited the money. Odile is shocked, but we realize, from her face, from the intonation of her voice, that she is shocked partly at her own response to the suggestion. Then there is her equivocal attitude to the robbery: she has told Franz about the money but, confronted by Arthur's brutal directness, his assumption that everything is agreed, she denies, horrified, that she intended any suggestion. She is not, however, sufficiently shocked to break with the men, and her *subconscious* complicity becomes clear enough. Later, when she rejoins them among the trees, she again displays shock at the idea that they plan the robbery. But in the interim we have seen her enter M. Stolz's room and examine the money (we have also seen her affectionately feeding a tame tiger).

The implications of such moments, clearly, are far from being confined to a specific character or a specific action: what we are being shown in gentle, conformist Odile is the anarchic desire to throw off restrictions that is presumably a constant factor in social man—precisely what makes a respectable bourgeois like myself respond so strongly to a Michel Poiccard or a Ferdinand Pierrot. A similar response may underlie much of the unreflecting hatred of Godard that one hears expressed. In *Bande à Part* Godard uses stylized effects to heighten, clarify or emphasize implications already latent in the action. The run through the Louvre is a case in point. This should not perhaps strictly be counted as 'stylized', because its action is 'naturalistically' possible and filmed quite straightforwardly. But I think it is legitimate to use it as illustration here, because its effect on the spectator is very different from that of the scenes I have been talking about. It has no *direct* narrative logic at that point in the film, and one is very much aware of it as a moment where Godard is reaching out to a significance beyond that of the implications of motivation-and-effect. The unprepared and illogical abruptness of the incident jolts us into a greater awareness of the issues. The run expresses in an extreme image the characters' anarchic tendencies—they are showing their contempt for society by flouting

one of France's most respected institutions. But the scene also takes up the theme established in the English lesson: the characters' isolation from traditional culture—from, in fact, any meaningful past. As they run past 'monuments of unageing intellect', the spectator finds himself torn between sharing the exhilaration of their unrestraint and pitying them for their complete lack of roots, lack of purpose, lack of meaning: an ambivalent response which is of central significance in relation to Godard's whole *oeuvre*.

Other leading themes are spotlit in the film's two musical numbers—the song in the Métro, the dance in the café—which, charming in their informality, in the spontaneity of effect, have the classic function of dance numbers in a musical, that of giving expression to dimensions of the characters which can only be hinted at in naturalistic action. The two are also complementary, the song insisting that we are all fundamentally the same, the dance suggesting our final separateness. Although the dancers are linked by the beat and steps of the routine, each appears entirely self-absorbed, unaware of the existence of the others. The dance suggests at once the illusion of togetherness and the reality of apartness; the three are, in their absorption, like dreamers (Franz is wondering, as he dances, whether 'the world is a dream or a dream the world'), and the dance also represents their enclosure in a dream-world: it is significant that Franz, much the most conscious of the three, tires of it first, and that Odile goes on dancing, rapt, some time after the men have stopped. These ideas are taken up on the naturalistic level near the end of the film, as Franz and Odile drive away after Arthur's death. Franz, in bitter disillusionment, talks of people's separateness: 'Each goes his own way, distrustful and tragic.' The dream is over. Odile wants the car roof closed, but Franz tells her it is broken: a bit of symbolism perhaps too simply illustrative, and in this untypical of Godard. I must add that here I find the treatment of this theme of separateness a trifle glib. The spontaneity and freedom Godard has won enable him at times to get away with talking about and embroidering lots of major issues without really exploring them; and he is not the only modern artist who has set out to demonstrate the impossibility of togetherness by means of characters who make no more than the most tentative gestures towards it. This theme, however, is taken up on a much deeper level in *Pierrot le Fou*.

Dream, and the discrepancies between fantasy and reality, is central to *Bande à Part*: Odile's song, with the stylized visual treatment it gets (the use of the station sign *Liberté*, the intercutting of daytime street shots, etc.) heightens and universalizes it: 'Hugging a dream that can't come true, telling yourself a thousand lies—I'm just like you.' 'Mascara for beauty and happiness', a magazine promises a girl in the café wash-room. Especially, Godard is concerned with the way the nature of people's dreams is determined by environmental factors. Godard's commentary reminds us frequently that the characters are basing their behaviour on pulp fiction and pop films, and this is not just a distanciation device: they decide to wait till night before carrying out the robbery 'out of respect for second-rate thrillers' (and promptly race through the Louvre to pass the time); Franz has a premonition of disaster 'like the hero of an epic'. The whole robbery is planned in simple gangster-film terms, the three expecting events to fall neatly into place around them: one is made aware all the time of their rawness, of their lack of the perspective and awareness that a sense of the cultural tradition might give. In the sequences of the abortive robbery-attempts Godard achieves a whole series of brilliant effects, at once funny and poignant, from the discrepancy between

the trio's gangster-film expectations and the (for the most part) limp and undramatic reality: the men prowling melodramatically round the house with Odile's black stockings over their heads and no one on hand to be impressed; the pathetic attempt to break into M. Stolz's room by means of a ladder, expressed in a sustained long-shot with Odile disconsolately patting the dog and the men not quite liking to smash the window in. Most striking of all, as illustration of this theme, however, is the ironic and horrible-funny contrast between Arthur's cinematically realistic but feigned death in his Billy-the-Kid game with Franz and the macabrely farcical *real* death at the hands of the veteran of Dien-Bien-Phu. For the audience, conditioned by previous cinematic experience, it is the pretended death that looks convincing. The point is of key importance in understanding the film, and returns us to the question of Godard's persistent use of distanciation and the satisfyingly organic relationship of form and content in *Bande à Part*. The film is about the tendency of audiences to use film (and popular literature) as a form of day-dream-indulgence, becoming uncritically lost in the easy solutions and evasions of melodrama so that their awareness of reality is blunted. The style is therefore deliberately educational: we are never allowed to lose ourselves in the action; our consciousness is nudged into constant vigilance. We are being taught how to use the cinema (see, for a more extreme lesson, the cinema sequence in *Les Carabiniers*) and taught also the need to bring full consciousness to bear on reality. Surely the most accurate translation of '*la conscience*', the word that still sounds vaguely familiar to Natasha von Braun, though it no longer exists according to the 'Bibles' of Alphaville, is not 'conscience' but 'consciousness'?

Still: Odile (Anna Karina) left dancing alone.

UNE FEMME MARIEE

Philip French

The film follows Charlotte (Macha Méril) during twenty-four hours, at the end of which her lover, Robert (Bernard Noël), an actor, is leaving to play a part in the provinces. Her husband, Pierre (Philippe Leroy), a pilot, returns from Germany with a passenger, Roger Leenhardt, whom they entertain to dinner. In the morning, she attends a photographic session and visits her doctor who confirms that she is pregnant. She drives to Orly and makes love with Robert before his 'plane leaves.

There is a title at the beginning of *Une Femme Mariée* describing it as '*Fragments d'un film tourné en 1964*' which seemed to convince most critics at the time that it was a modest little offering run up for the 1964 Venice Festival. But far from being, as one of them put it, merely 'a good juggling act' (another praised it for 'attempting less than his two previous pictures—the bogus *Bande à Part* and the loathsome *Les Carabiniers*'), *Une Femme Mariée* struck me as being Jean-Luc Godard's most complex picture to date and in hindsight as marking an important development in his career. Much as I admire the films that preceded it, they all had in varying degrees a quality of naivety which underpinned the innovatory exuberance but denied these movies the countervailing critical quality that his subsequent work so strongly contains. One is guessing here, but there is reason to believe that the experience of directing *Le Mépris* the year before, and the troubles attendant on that ill-starred venture, made an important contribution to Godard's maturation.

With *Une Femme Mariée* we engage for the first time—directly and centrally—with one of the most remarkable *minds* in the history of the cinema, with the work of a true sociologist (in John Simon's definition: 'a student of society, not merely someone with an advanced degree in sociology'). Now Godard would be the last person to claim that he was making a sudden break with the past—his own or that of the cinema. *Une Femme Mariée* is a modernist work in Clement Greenberg's sense:

Ever so many factors thought to be essential to the making and experiencing of art have been shown not to be so by the fact that Modernist art has been able to dispense with them and yet continue to provide the experience of art in all its essentials. That this 'demonstration' has left most of our old value *judgments intact only makes it the more conclusive.*

Godard is of course still preoccupied with the nature of the cinema, and this explains not only the references to other films and film-makers that recur throughout his movies, but also his whole conception of cinematic form. Exactly why this preoccupation, which is lightly enough handled, should annoy people so much is hard to say; he is only seeking in the nature of his art what a tradition of artists from Joyce and Picasso to Nabokov and Johns have sought in theirs. These names are not invoked incidentally as some modernist litany but to establish what seems to me the self-evident context in which his work should be seen.

Godard's concern is not, as has often been asserted, the limited vision of the movie-fan

(though he is one), but an indication of the cinema as his chosen area for examining issues of illusion and reality, experience and imagination, doing and being, the nature of truth and personal identity. Take for instance the opening title '*en noir et blanc*'. This is a statement of fact and a joke; it *is* in black and white. But it is more than this—for *Une Femme Mariée* is in black and white in the way that *The Red Desert* is in colour, and it is, too, a comment on the character of the film. One of its major themes is the nature of images and of their potency—in advertising, politics, mass communications, sociology—and of our position in a society in which we are creating roles for other people and having them imposed upon ourselves. It is also in black and white in the sense that Robert Rauschenberg's most recent silk-screen paintings are—that film imposes a uniformity of texture upon material that would otherwise constitute a *collage*.

To pursue the analogy with Rauschenberg a little further—*Une Femme Mariée* is, like

Still: Charlotte (Macha Méril) and her husband Pierre (Philippe Leroy).

Rauschenberg's vast black-and-white canvas 'Barge', a combination of a complex series of cultural (artistic and social) references and contrasting styles controlled by an instinctive sense of overall form, but upon which the spectator cannot impose a single general meaning, or at least not articulate it. In both cases resonances and reverberations are started that go beyond anything inherent in the individual elements. The film is a statement about a society in flux and the opposite of an art of preconception.

The basic framework of the picture is twenty-four hours in the life of Charlotte (Macha Méril), a married woman with an editorial job on a women's magazine in Paris. Roughly speaking it can be divided into nine sections: (1) Charlotte with her lover Robert (Bernard Noel), an actor, in his apartment; (2) Robert drives Charlotte to the centre of Paris where she picks up her six-year-old step-son Nicholas and takes him to the Paris aeroclub to meet her husband Pierre (Philippe Leroy), a pilot, who has flown in from Germany with a M. Leenhardt; (3) at home that evening Charlotte and Pierre have an argument in their bedroom and then entertain Leenhardt to dinner; (4) after he has left they play records in the living room and then make love; (5) next morning Charlotte gets up late, takes a bath, converses with the charwoman, Mme Céline; (6) she attends a photo-modelling session at a swimming-pool and has coffee in the restaurant there; (7) she visits her doctor and discovers she is three months pregnant (though whether the father is Pierre or Robert she does not know); (8) she takes a taxi to Orly, meets Robert by arrangement in the airport cinema, and follows him to his hotel bedroom; (9) Charlotte and Robert talk and make love in the hour before his 'plane leaves.

This could have been the basis for a straight 'twenty-four hours in the life of' narrative, but it is broken up by variations in style of which the extremes are to be found in the three scenes of love-making and the seven *cinéma-vérité* type interviews. The former are concerned with immaculately told lies, the latter with ragged truth; the aim of both is alienation of different kinds.

The love-making episodes are composed of stylised scenes, some lasting only a few seconds —close-ups of hands, two knees, the back of a head, a navel, shot against a smooth white sheet, accompanied by a couple of lines of dialogue, always ending with a fade out. The

audience is prevented from participating in an erotic experience by the fragmentation of the bodies and the disruption of continuity. This is not a case of Godard's excessive Swiss *pudeur* (though there's an element of this in his films) but a desire to avoid the too personal or mystical associations these sequences might have. The audience's attention is focused instead upon a ritual enactment that undergoes subtle visual and verbal variations within each sequence and from one act of love-making to the other. The arrangement of limbs suggests a connection with sculpture (art and permanence) which is echoed by shots of statues that Charlotte and Robert drive past in the rain, and with advertising (commerce and expendability). Among many other things these scenes give us two symbols—as the hands reach towards each other Charlotte's wedding ring and Robert's wrist-watch are juxtaposed, the symbol of the approved social bond of the 'stable' relationship against the symbol of existing in the moment, attending upon time.

At the other extreme from this are the interviews. The first four come together in what I have called section three. First the husband talks of 'Memory', followed by Charlotte on 'The Present', Leenhardt on 'Intelligence', and the son Nicholas on 'Childhood'—he appears in the bedroom door to reel off ten rules on setting about a painting which could be taken as a joke about *cinéma-vérité* or a statement about how simple life looks to a pre-adolescent child, but in fact it gets very close to the kind of painter's notes that often turn up in *avant-garde* magazines. In the fifth interview the charwoman describes her hugely satisfying love-making with her husband—ending with a cut to the title of the book from which it is quoted, Céline's *Death on the Instalment Plan*, thus implying, like all of them,

a larger social contact than the one under immediate scrutiny. In the sixth and seventh, Charlotte questions her doctor and lover on, respectively, 'Pleasure and Science' and 'The Theatre and Love'.

To some critics these interviews are pointless intrusions but to me they seem crucial to Godard's purpose. Where the treatment of the love scenes is concerned with our attitude to the characters, the interviews deal with the actors' own relationship with the people they are portraying as well as the role that the characters conceive of themselves playing in a given situation. These comments extend the reference of the film; they contain their own criticism of the picture's conception and are aimed at compelling the audience to recognize it. If the alienation in the love-making and other sequences is something like the *Verfremdungseffekt* of Brecht, that of the interviews is quite personal to Godard—a device that will prevent us from getting some 'message' that he might be tempted to deliver. In this respect *Une Femme Mariée* differs from that most consciously Brechtian movie *Vivre sa Vie*; a widening of Godard's social vision and a new sense of urgency to communicate his ideas have increasingly put him on his guard against didacticism.

Although it is a very real world that Charlotte inhabits, there is also the feeling that it is (literally and figuratively) a dream world. She is constantly exposed to the images of women's magazines and advertising that exhort her to do this, be like that, and bombarded by popular songs that express and form emotions. This process—and Godard is concerned to present her total environment—seeks to reduce her to an object and it is in this role as an other-directed member of the lonely crowd that we see her most of the time. She takes seriously an article in Elle on 'How to have a fashionable bust' and follows the pseudo-scientific instructions of measurement which aim at the discovery of an 'equilateral triangle'—a term which neither she nor her husband (nor later her charwoman) understand. She is hypnotised by advertisements for underwear which she views as an earlier generation would have looked at religious icons. (At one point the camera pans from Charlotte standing beneath a giant bra advertisement to her crossing the street in front of a church.) There is, too, her professional involvement in the projection of these dream images, and when she attends the modelling session at the swimming-pool, Godard shows the sequence in negative to emphasize the process of their creation. It is hardly surprising that Charlotte has no idea of what reality is, or what freedom means. As the signal '*libre*' cranks down on a taxi meter it could mean being alone in the back of a cab. One of the recurring signs in the picture is the slogan '*Prenez Parti*' which ironically projects Charlotte's role from a domestic into a political situation. Here and throughout Godard plays with signs with the dry humour of Humbert Humbert and the witty elegance of Stuart Davis.

But in a literal sense there is a dream world here—film as dream. Firstly there are the Molly Bloom-like soliloquies and the love-making sequences. Secondly Charlotte is identified, in a way that recalls 'Finnegan's Wake', with Eve (the central letters of 'REVES' on a hoarding are picked out as she falls in the street), with Bérénice (Robert is off to appear as Titus in a Racine production in Marseilles and she rehearses the final scene with him in the airport hotel before he leaves), with Scarlett O'Hara, with an angel (the camera zooms in on a 'Danger' sign as she drives to

Still: Charlotte (Macha Méril) and her lover, Robert (Bernard Noel).

Still: Charlotte (Macha Méril) and Pierre (Philippe Leroy).

the airport). By a wide range of signs, symbols and suggestions, then, Godard builds up this enigmatic portrait, and in his semantic investigation he has been helped by the French censors' demand that the film's title should be changed from the definite to the indefinite article.

All these associations however are imposed on Charlotte—she herself is utterly committed to the present, though far from happy in it. When she meets Roger Leenhardt at the airport and he talks of the Auschwitz trials, her mind immediately connects with the Belgian thalidomide abortion trials in Liège, another image of deformity, and a subject of pressing concern to her as we see when she later takes up the subject of painless childbirth with the doctor. On being reminded of the real meaning of Auschwitz, she says 'Ah Oui, Hitler', but cannot comprehend its true significance. This theme arises when her husband in his interview refers to the trials and relates an anecdote about a party of deportees who, ten years after

the war, cannot come to terms with the change in their lives. This ties in with the cinematic references for the story he says was told him by 'Rossellini' (one of Godard's mentors and the source of the idea for *Les Carabiniers*). This in turn relates to the presence of the veteran critic and film maker Roger Leenhardt who directs our attention generally to another aspect of Godard's cinema as well as specifically to his own film *Le Rendezvous de Minuit*. (This is, I think, confirmed by Leenhardt quoting Apollinaire's 'Now is the time for passionate reason' apropos of Charlotte's situation; we recall that a verse of Apollinaire runs through *Le Rendezvous*. The appearance of another director in one of Godard's pictures is always an invitation to invoke the whole corpus of his work in relation to the current undertaking e.g. Jean-Pierre Melville in *A Bout de Souffle*, Fritz Lang in *Le Mépris*, Samuel Fuller in *Pierrot le Fou*.) Charlotte's failure, or dislocation, of sensibility is finally brought home to us at Orly airport when she and Robert leave the cinema after the opening scene of *Nuit et Brouillard*, which comments on the ease with which an ordinary village can become a concentration camp and then ten years later become a forgotten village again.

'Understanding before action' is how Leenhardt sums up his own philosophy and perhaps one might conclude that the theme of this strand of the film is the difficulty of either.

Here Godard is perhaps making a direct challenge to the audience in identifying Charlotte with its laziest and most indulgent element. When we watch her in the Orly cinema, are we seeing her or ourselves, or experiencing Resnais' film in a new way? (Earlier on when Robert asks her why she is lounging in the car she tells him that 'It's the ideal position for a film audience.') It is no coincidence that *Nuit et Brouillard* happens to be playing (in a remarkable double-bill) with Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, a film concerned with lost memory, guilt and a recurrent dream. As Charlotte enters the cinema, she sees a poster with Hitchcock's familiar features on it and the soundtrack gives us a few bars of the Beethoven quartet which in fragmentary form is used as a dream motif elsewhere. When the lovers emerge from the cinema they go their separate ways around the well of the airport lounge to the hotel entrance where Robert 'accidentally' drops his keys to let Charlotte know his room number—a characteristic Hitchcock situation with the camera following them in a classically Hitchcockian tracking movement.

It is clearly possible to make out a case for Godard's holding up Charlotte to ridicule and it is true that there has always been a strongly misogynistic vein underlying his fascination with the mystery of women. But it would be as difficult to sustain this as it would be to prove

that Godard was seeking merely to attack a mass society. At points, of course, the intention is obviously satirical, as when Charlotte and Pierre describe their apartment to Leenhardt as if reciting lines from an estate agent's prospectus. (One recalls this scene on seeing the party sequence in *Pierrot le Fou* where everyone, with the exception of Samuel Fuller, addresses Belmondo in the words and tone of advertising copy). And when Robert recalls his hero, Molière's rejection of Bossuet's 'Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie', he is speaking for Godard. Apparently satiric, though oddly affecting too, is the scene where Charlotte overhears the conversation of two young girls at an adjoining table in the swimming-pool restaurant. She is looking at a women's magazine and discovers first the words 'What every woman should know' and then her eyes light upon an advert with the captions 'One who knows' and 'One who doesn't'. The girls, who up to this point have been talking like model consumers about fashions and vacations (with a boy friend called Patrick which brings in Godard's early movie *Tous les garçons s'appellent Patrick*, a cinematic anecdote about two girls who impose different identities upon the same man), proceed to discuss sex with one instructing the other in the techniques of love; as they chatter, snatches of their conversation appear between them in sub-titles. Suddenly as Charlotte starts flicking once more through adverts for swimsuits, bras and sanitary towels, a juke box belts out a Sylvie Vartan number called 'I took myself to the cinema', about a girl who cried as she saw her boy friend kissing another girl in the pictures, and, although she tells her parents it was a sad movie, one infers that she could not decide whether it was this incident or the film that was moving her to tears. The question of movie tears comes up again at the end and associates the tearful parting of Bérénice and Titus with the putative tears of Charlotte, though we see only her hand.

This restaurant scene, dazzling in its virtuosity, is in some ways the key sequence to the picture, and its initial satirical undertones are ultimately subservient to the Godard *Gestalt*. But it must be taken alongside one of wholly different character and intent—that in which Charlotte and Pierre are together in the living room before they make love. This scene is crucial in its comment upon marriage, in establishing the difference between husband and lover, who are in so many ways similar, and in defining the degree to which Godard treats Charlotte as an object in a phenomenalistic universe. It is an analytical sequence in the way that the later restaurant scene is synthetic.

As the scene opens, Charlotte finds a pile of so-called erotic LP discs belonging to a client of Pierre. Against his protests she puts one on the record player—it's called 'Erotica' and consists entirely of supposedly sexy laughter. In a long-held shot, Pierre, dressed in pyjamas, stands with his head out of frame (suggesting possibly emasculation), a Picasso harlequin (also head out of frame) on the wall beside him; Charlotte meanwhile drifts around with a drink in her hands. Before and after the record she runs from room to room pursued by Pierre who is trying to prevent her hearing the records. In this chase she moves with a natural animal-like grace quite in contrast to the rather flat-footed way she goes along the street, the stylised listless quality of the love episodes, or the mechanical manner in which she gets dressed. She is, however, sufficiently aware at this point of the failure of certain calculated stimuli in a fashion that seriously embarrasses her husband who eventually manages to re-

Still: Une Femme Mariée. *Charlotte (Macha Méril) changes taxis.*

place the erotic record with Beethoven. As the quartet plays, so a transition is made to the love scene by a record sleeve picture of Marlene Dietrich being slipped aside to reveal a portrait of Beethoven, perhaps the best example in the picture of Godard's personal dialectic.

It is in the light of this scene that the significance of Charlotte's envying the simplicity of animals during her interview is most apparent, and it takes on special meaning when set against Pierre's fascination with flying. At every opportunity he picks up one of the model planes that decorate the apartment, and after wryly envying the auto-pilot that has flown him back from Germany, remarks that the first thing the machine does is to learn to remember and that 'it remembers better than I do'. We remember that the first appearance of Pierre in the film (during the first scene with the lover) is not as an image of himself but a brief insert of a plane in flight (used to cover a censor cut in the love scene). Here Godard is playing with an idea examined at length by Marshall McLuhan about the way in which inventions are not things that are merely used, but become mechanical or electronic extensions of ourselves and of the central nervous system, until finally a point is reached where they overtake and possess us.

Une Femme Mariée is an impossible film to sum up, for it contains all the disparate items that are usually included in a time capsule. When we think of a time capsule we ask three questions: Is everything there about our society that should be there? What can we make of its contents now? What will the future generation that opens it up deduce about us? The intrinsic artistic merits of the film aside, this is the way we must approach Godard's fragments of 1964, which he has shored against our ruin.

Still: Charlotte (Macha Méril).

ALPHAVILLE

Robin Wood

Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine) goes to Alphaville, disguised as Ivan Johnson, journalist on Figaro-Pravda. His assignment is to bring back or kill Dr von Braun (Howard Vernon), who left the Outer Countries some years before and is in charge of Alpha-60, the computer which runs Alphaville. Caution's only contact is an agent, Henri Dixon (Akim Tamiroff), whom he discovers dying in a seedy hotel. His official guide through Alphaville is von Braun's daughter, Natasha (Anna Karina). Caution teaches her words which have been erased from the Bible or official dictionary. Questioned by the computer, he gives answers that throw it into confusion. He kills von Braun and wrecks the controls of the computer. From the death-throes of Alphaville he rescues Natasha and they drive away to the Outer Countries.

In terms of intellectually worked out prophecy, *Alphaville* offers little that is new, most of its ideas about the future of society being traceable to '1984', 'Brave New World' and other works. This has led certain critics to dismiss it as pretentiously unoriginal. But I think, if such people are honest, they will allow a certain discrepancy between their response to the extricable prophetic ideas on paper, and their response to the movement of images that is the film. *Alphaville* cannot be dismissed as merely the sum of certain second-hand ideas; it is an intensely felt unity with an atmospheric and emotional coherence to which the ideas contribute but whose value is by no means restricted to the value of the ideas as ideas. In other words, it is a work of art, not a prophecy, and Godard is an artist, not a philosopher. It is worth insisting on this, because so often one finds that people's concern with what his films *mean* eclipses their response to what they *are*.

A film director works with concrete materials —actors, cameras, sets, lights. The genuineness of his work cannot be tested by discussion of extractable ideas, but only by the response evoked by the images on the screen; we must beware, that is, of separating an idea from its concrete realization. The critic is not concerned (for example) with the value or originality of the abstracted idea of a state that suppresses 'illogical' words, but with the way in which Anna Karina turns to the window, with the precise intonation of her voice, with the troubled look on her face as long-buried emotions begin to stir to life and she murmurs to herself the word '*Conscience*' and laments that no one knows its meaning any more, then shrugs it all off with an abrupt '*Tant pis*'. The very nature of *Alphaville* tends to distract one from noticing the marvellous precision and flexibility with which Godard directs his actors, but, when one *does* begin to be conscious of it, it is as striking here as anywhere else, especially in Karina's touching performance.

The ideas in *Alphaville* that *are* worth disentangling are those in which one senses, through their realization in the film, that Godard was most deeply and personally involved. These same ideas are most central to his whole *oeuvre*, relating *Alphaville* thematically to his other films. Godard is usually considered an 'intellectual' film-maker, but if the description is to be at all acceptable we shall have to

Photograph: Godard directing Eddie Constantine in Alphaville.

define it carefully. Certainly his films make considerable intellectual demands on the spectator. But if an 'intellectual' is someone whose reason is always in full control, a monster presiding over and paralyzing emotion and instinct, then Godard is the least intellectual of film-makers, because the most instinctive. Above all one admires in him, though it is also his greatest danger, the freedom he dares allow his instincts, the courage to do what he wants when he wants, which at times can lapse into self-indulgence. The subject of *Alphaville* is obviously very dear to him, rooted as it is not only in certain modern social-spiritual trends, but also in the archetypal Freudian superego-id struggle. On one level, it is about the atrophy of the whole instinctive-emotional side of the personality when the Superego (Alpha 60 plus father-figure von Braun) gains apparent total control, and the revitalizing and avenging eruption of the suppressed Id (Lemmy Caution).

I shall begin with the inconsistencies that

have troubled some of our more literal-minded friends. Where is Alphaville situated, either in time or space? More precisely, what exactly is its relationship to the 'Outer Countries'? Lemmy Caution travels through 'inter-sidereal space' in his Ford-Galaxie (he tells Alpha 60 during the first interrogation that 'the silence of infinite space appalled me') and drives in through the suburbs. The Outer Countries include Nueva York, Tokyorama and Florence, of which the last two at least (Lemmy tells Natasha as they drive away at the end) are still 'happy cities' (Alphaville of course is the '*Capitale de la Douleur*'). But Alphaville—as we have been told so often—is also modern Paris, and Godard said in an interview that he thought of Lemmy, not as a present-day human transported into the future, but as a man from twenty years ago who suddenly finds himself in the world of today. (One does not, of course, have to accept what Godard says in interviews or anywhere else: the film is still the film). Let me state the obvious: Alphaville is *not* modern Paris, nor does it correspond, in any literal sense, to present-day reality. Or, if it *is* modern Paris, then so are the Outer Countries. Just as Godard and Coutard created the physical Alphaville, not by building futuristic sets, but by isolating certain elements of contemporary Paris, so Alphaville as a spiritual symbol is created by isolating, for clarity and emphasis, certain aspects of contemporary spiritual reality. Godard has also said that the '*Femme Mariée*' is as much an inhabitant of Alphaville as any of the characters in the later film. She isn't; but one can see that certain aspects of her, perhaps central ones, isolated and magnified, would give us something characteristically Alphavillian. We could trace this right back to certain aspects of Patricia Franchini in *A Bout de Souffle*, the American girl who wished she was called Ingrid—remembering that Americans and Swedes are among those most easily assimilated into Alphaville.

As soon as one begins to examine the 'inconsistencies', in fact, one sees that they are beyond the reach of criticism. One can no more ask why, if Alphaville is Paris, New York and Tokyo haven't developed similarly, than one can ask how Lemmy drove through space in a car. Godard systematically undercuts all possibility of definable time-space relationships of this kind. We are told at the outset that we are going to see reality re-created in the form of legend; we can surely accept that Orpheus descended into the Underworld to rescue Eurydice without demanding to know his precise route.

It is not only that time and space are denied specification: Godard also denies us the security of being able to regard the characters quite as we have become accustomed to regard characters in films. We all know, rationally, that a film is a film and life is life. Nevertheless, while watching a film most of us tend to think of the characters not as 'characters' but as people. Godard insists that we regard them as characters. We are not allowed to forget, in watching *Alphaville*, that this guy is Lemmy Caution and that Lemmy Caution is a hero originally from pop fiction who has been incarnated by Eddie Constantine in numerous French pop thrillers. You might compare him to a cut-out from a photograph inserted in a painting by an exponent of Pop-art: no one would mistake this for a detailed portrait of a human being: rather, it is a reference. Lemmy Caution in *Alphaville* is less a character than a reference.

A reference to what? Above all, to the popular arts themselves, where Godard sees lingering on, in a form still robust however debased, remnants of those human qualities whose extinction Alphaville threatens: particularly, instinct and emotion. Godard is

suggesting that the popular arts are the only place where we can look for a force vital enough to combat the deadening, dehumanizing, automatizing effect of those tendencies Alphaville epitomises. However, the popular arts linger on, now, only in the Outer Countries—they have ceased to be central to our culture. We already know, from *Bande à Part* and other films, what *else* Godard thinks of the popular arts, as purveyors of insidious and damaging fantasies that blunt one's awareness of the complexities of reality. It is this ambivalence, which has its roots way back in the famous ironic-unironic dedication of *A Bout de Souffle* to Monogram Pictures, on which *Alphaville* is built, and which leads to its haunting ambiguities and desperation.

The *Liebestod* of Henri Dickson and the response it evokes are central to Godard's conception, and to the whole *feel* of the film. The scene strikes us as at once repulsive and beautiful. Dickson is an old man trying to copulate with a young, indifferent and mercenary prostitute amid conditions of extreme squalor. But the act, debased as it superficially is, is also an assertion of the dignity of human feelings and human needs in a context that seeks to annihilate both. Dickson's courting of the girl ('Madame la Marquise . . . Madame Pompadour . . . Madame Bovary . . . Marie Antoinette . . .') evokes a whole civilized tradition which at once contrasts with the miserable present, intensifying its squalor, and does something to ennoble it, Dickson's manner suddenly assuming a touching courtesy by which the girl, hardened as she is, is not entirely untouched. The ambivalence is there in Lemmy Caution's face itself, the face of a middle-aged man, worn, battered, weary with experience and exposure to corruption, yet resilient and rugged, with its own curious nobility. Because we are never allowed to think of him as a character in the traditional sense, we are entitled to reflect not only on Lemmy Caution but on Eddie Constantine, veteran of a whole chain of fifth-rate Lemmy Caution thrillers, character and actor alike debased by their involvement in a squalidly commercial world, yet retaining an innate dignity and authority, at once corrupted and incorruptible.

What values—or rather what negation of values—does Alphaville embody? And how does this 'recreated reality' of legend relate to reality as we know it? I can answer the second question most easily, I think, by calling in an intermediary between these 'realities': the party scene near the beginning of *Pierrot le Fou*. This scene is certainly not 'reality', but its relation to reality is surely quite clear: no party we have ever attended has been quite like it, but we can probably relate parties in our experience to it. The guests, apart from Ferdinand-Pierrot and Sam Fuller, strike us as zombies or automata, incapable of communication or of spontaneous feeling, utterly trivialized. Pierrot's response is to use a cake in exactly the same spirit as Lemmy uses his gun. Alphaville is another distillation from contemporary reality, parallel though not identical. It is also parallel, though it may seem at first sight diametrically opposed, to the muddy field and its quartet of inhabitants in *Les Carabiniers*. In all these distillations, the essential is this: we are shown people without roots in any tradition, and without awareness, living only in the present.

The most obvious component in the great nightmare negation of Alphaville is the suppression of emotion and instinct: an anxiety so widespread in popular science fiction that one scarcely needs to prove its validity. When Lemmy is convulsed with laughter at Story No. 842, he is not merely being put in a defenceless position in order to be beaten up: he is being tricked into revealing his retrogressive

humanity. The incident recalls strikingly the moment in Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body-Snatchers* where the girl screams because a dog is nearly run over, and so reveals the fact that she is still human. Lemmy's order is '*Sauve qui pleurent*': itself ambiguous. It could imply that all those in Alphaville are inwardly weeping, hence capable of salvation: an idea that gets some support from the inconsistencies of certain of Alphaville's 'typical' citizens: the third-class seductress who guides Lemmy to his room (second time) and asks 'Why?', the driver of the police-car who responds to being held up at gun-point (and so, presumably, fears death). Or the order could imply that Lemmy is to save only those few who are still redeemable, like Natasha von Braun who weeps when he is beaten up, recalling the man who was condemned because he wept when his wife died. So Godard is torn between the optimistic idea of saving civilization and the pessimistic idea of saving a select few: between the optimism of redemption and the pessimism of

Still: Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine), Natasha von Braun (Anna Karina) and the police.

flight. Lemmy tells Natasha at the end that Alphaville *may* now become a 'happy city'. But the two are fleeing, and Natasha mustn't look back. The ambiguity adds to the film's rich confusion. We live in an age when the characteristic aim of the artist is no longer confident assertion, but the definition of his own uncertainties.

Beyond this concern with the death of emotion we can discover the most complete statement to date of Godard's recurrent concern with tradition and the arts, and their relation to the individual. In Alphaville there is no art (the word 'poetry' has disappeared long since from the 'Bible') and tradition has been destroyed: there is no past and no future, all life is in the present. The Godard hero tends also to live very much in the present, but in a very different sense. Lemmy himself tells Alpha 60 that his religion is 'the immediate promptings of my conscience' (though 'awareness', here as elsewhere, might be a better rendering of the French *conscience*). Ambiguity (perhaps even double-think) manifests itself again in what Godard, licensed by the freedom of working not with people, but with 'characters' who can consequently be made to act out of character at the director's whim, makes of Lemmy Caution. Basically he is the archetypal pop fiction hero who settles everything with fists and gun on the spur of the moment, but Godard arms him also with poems by Eluard and sets him up, with daring incongruity, as a defender of the cultural/artistic tradition who can declare as part of his creed that poetry brings light out of darkness. The inhabitants of Alphaville live in the present because they have been reduced to the level of automata; Lemmy lives in the present as a man instinctively alive. The ideal Godardian morality is implicit here, I think: spontaneous-intuitive action directed by a controlling and responsible (up to a point) awareness: the two qualities that Alphaville negates. As there is neither past nor future, Alphaville is beyond significant change: one gets the impression of a people frozen in a routine monotony, with no awareness of anything they have changed *from* or of anything to change *to*. The significance—and also the essential desperation—of Godard's attempt to fuse by violence the somewhat suspect vitality of pop culture to the sense of tradition embodied in the arts should now be clear. In some respects what Godard is doing here is analogous to what Stravinsky did in, for example, 'L'Histoire du Soldat'. Stravinsky uses the tango, the waltz, the march and ragtime, subjecting them to processes of extreme contrapuntal ingenuity and juxtaposing them with Bach-ish Chorales, without any hint of condescension and not at all in a spirit of parody; if he reduces these forms to basic clichés, it is not to mock the clichés but to validate them by investing them with his own intellectual and physical vitality. One can say precisely the same of the elements of comic-strip and pulp-fiction in *Alphaville*.

These revitalized clichés of pop culture co-exist in the film with certain other revitalized clichés of a very different nature: archetypal images of an extreme simplicity but so basic that they can still be invested with great potency. At the beginning of *Les Carabiniers* Godard quotes with approval Borges' preference for the old, simple metaphors that have been tested by time and usage. *Alphaville* is founded particularly on two pairs of opposed images: light and darkness, the straight line and the circle. The film's whole visual structure is determined by these oppositions, around which group themselves pairs of opposed ideas: isolation/togetherness, technology/art, emotional death/love. I want to consider some points where Godard uses the light/darkness opposition with great power.

As Lemmy and Henri Dickson talk on the

stairs of Dickson's shabby hotel, a single naked light bulb swings between them. The emotional effect of the scene derives primarily from our sense of a small circle of light—the unguarded bulb seeming very precarious and vulnerable—surrounded by an enclosing, menacing blackness. At the same time the light shining into Dickson's face has a merciless quality, as if it were cruelly exposing his weaknesses and decay. The scene movingly epitomizes a mood basic to the whole film: the sense of Lemmy and Dickson representing a last, and perhaps inadequate and crumbling survival of humanity in a civilization becoming increasingly dehumanized. Dickson talks of the inability of some people to adjust, and Godard cuts in suddenly a shot of the illuminated exterior of a vast office building with thousands of identical, anonymous windows. Light, like everything else, is equivocal in Alphaville: there is the naked light bulb, there is also the glare of Alpha 60 during the interrogations, light that helps you to see and light that blinds; there is Lemmy's poetry that brings light out of darkness, and the light of Professor von Braun's declaration of faith, 'We are entering the Civilization of Light'; and there is the light Lemmy has travelled 9,000 kilometres to bring Natasha (he creates it, significantly enough, with his gun, fired at a cigarette-lighter). When Lemmy rejoins in the *Programmation et Mémoire* room, the only light is from a torch he holds first to Natasha's face, then to his own. As he does so, Alpha 60 is proclaiming that 'the present is the only form of all life'. Lemmy's gesture with the torch insists on the relatedness of himself and Natasha, unites them in light within a great darkness; since each face is illuminated in turn, it also insists on them as separate individuals (Alpha 60: 'We are

Still: Natasha von Braun (Anna Karina) in the hotel corridor.

totally alone here. We are unique—appallingly unique'). The moment is 'immortalized' in the ritualistic and timeless love-scene, where at one point the faces of the lovers are again alternately lit.

This love scene seems to me the core of the film. It is framed between the shot of the police-car drawing up outside the hotel and the moment when the police break in, yet it also covers a long passage of time (just before the police break in, Lemmy is washing, as if to begin a new day). Godard sets it apart in style as in time: it has elements of ballet and

Stills: Lemmy (Eddie Constantine) and Natasha (Anna Karina) in the interrogation room.

elements of ritual, an extreme stylization into which Godard modulates with perfect naturalness and aplomb. The words Natasha speaks draw together many of the leading *motifs* of the film, sometimes echoing earlier passages: 'One single smile between us both . . . I watched the night create the day' (compare Lemmy's first interrogation by Alpha 60)—'One need only advance to live, go straight forward towards all you love' (compare the condemned man on the

diving-board during the ritual-executions, who goes straight forward to his death) . . . 'I was going towards you, I was perpetually moving towards the light . . .' The scene is the perfect realization of the answer to the riddle Lemmy later puts to Alpha 60, his 'secret': something that never changes with the night or the day, that advances from past to future in a straight line, but nevertheless ends by completing a circuit: the answer, with which he deals Alpha 60 its death-blow as he saves Natasha at the end—'Our happiness', the formation of a permanent relationship that is at once eternal and constantly developing.

As well as its obvious basis in popular fiction and strip cartoon, *Alphaville* is rooted in a wider, more time-sanctioned mythology. What I want to speak of now is more a matter of resonances than of detailed parallels: rather as Eliot's line 'Pray for Floret, by the boar-hound slain between the yew trees' depends for its full emotional effect on our knowledge of the Actaeon and Adonis myths without *precisely* referring to either. Two myths in particular seem to me important as background to *Alphaville*. The more obvious is that of Orpheus and

Eurydice. Natasha is a shade among shades: Lemmy-Orpheus descends into the Underworld to bring her back to life (to bring her light, the fire of his cigarette-lighter, which makes him also like Prometheus, who defied a father-figure as apparently omnipotent as Alpha 60). Natasha is in a sense the centre of the film, its most complete *character* in the traditional sense—that is to say, the one most nearly approaching a rounded reality—and *Alphaville* is about her resurrection: the film's intensest and most beautiful moments arise from this. The second myth is that of Oedipus, with the computer, in another daring Godardian fusion, combining Sphinx and father-figure (Natasha, in her Alphavillian inscrutability, reminds Lemmy of a 'pretty Sphinx'). The parallels here are numerous: Alphaville is plague-tormented Thebes which can only be saved when the Sphinx is vanquished (another fusion of ideas here). Many (Dick Tracy, Flash Gordon, Henri Dickson) have already perished attempting to outwit it. Like the Sphinx, Alpha 60 is inscrutable and inhuman; in fact, it can't be destroyed, but must be led to destroy itself. Its self-destruction, again, depends on the simple solution to a complicated enigma; though here the riddle is posed by Lemmy-Oedipus. The presence of these myths, subliminal perhaps, but surely there, along with Freudian overtones, pop elements and the redeeming power of the arts, greatly intensifies the emotional effect of *Alphaville*.

Still: the swimming pool execution spectacle in Alphaville.

The film's *synthetic* power (I shall not mind if readers hear overtones of the modern as well as the root sense of the word here), and also its ambiguity, reach a climax in the closing moments. Even the destruction of Alpha 60 is ambiguous: Lemmy kills it both by blasting away with his gun and by achieving a permanent relationship with Natasha. As the lovers drive away Natasha manages to drag from her subconscious the long-repressed words '*Je . . . vous . . . aime*'. Godard connects the effect of comic-strip happy end with fairy-tale and myth to establish its emotional validity. There is something of the Sleeping Beauty here—Natasha re-awakened to life; and we have the common fairy-tale idea of the magic words that break the spell. As Lemmy says

'Don't look back', the two become at once Orpheus and Eurydice emerging from the Underworld and Lot and his wife escaping from Sodom. On one level the total effect is wholly unironic, on another coloured by the bitterest irony. Godard is insisting on the emotional validity of his purified cliché; at the same time our awareness that we are watching 'characters', not people, calls into question all possibility of practical application and suggests that happy ends only exist in the comic-strips. But perhaps humanity needs resurrection-myths even if no one gets resurrected—at least they mark a goal to aim for.

Alphaville has at least its fair share of those annoying and unhelpful obscurities I mentioned in discussing *Bande à Part*: the side-products of Godard's marvellous creative freedom. The division of Alphaville into North and South Zones, snow in one, sun in the other, perhaps establishes the circular nature of the city and suggests the inhabitants' indifference to physical conditions, hence the death of their instincts, but the idea is given too much prominence for such flimsy explanations to justify it. The brief and apparently random excursions into negative perhaps provide distanciation at what might have been mistaken for an exciting climax (or do they intensify the strangeness, hence the terror?—another insoluble ambiguity) and, being illogical, represent a nose-thumbing at Alphavillian logic; but again, these justifications seem too facile to justify so obtrusive an effect, leaving one to conclude that the device itself is facile and that Godard has confused distanciation with distraction. And I have no idea why Natasha materializes supernaturally behind three consecutive doors in Lemmy's hotel suite (it could hardly be a continuity error . . .). But, after several viewings, I find *Alphaville* powerful, compelling and complex enough as a whole to over-ride minor objections to parts.

A tentative objection remains: does Godard accept too easily—here and in other of his films—the close association of all positive values with violence and brutality? When one feels deeply uneasy about much of the violence in his films, is one responding *with* the director or *against* him? Do I merely demonstrate my incurable squareness by finding distasteful (to take one small example from dozens that offer themselves) the moment when Lemmy drives the car over the head of the garage superintendent? Audiences find it funny and clever, and seem to be encouraged to do so by the off-hand manner of the presentation (we simply see the car heaving up). The action is entirely gratuitous—the man is already, presumably, safely unconscious. One can see it as demonstrating the debased, brutalized side of Lemmy, as an expression of Godard's desperation: he is then saying (with Samuel Fuller perhaps, but with a higher degree of awareness —see *Pick-up on South Street*, etc.), 'See, our only salvation now lies with the brutes—to act at all you have to act violently, and violence corrupts—the sensitive are powerless.' But it is difficult not to feel that he merely *enjoys* it, and himself finds it funny. Doubtless I shall be accused of taking it too seriously; but I don't think one can call in the aid of distanciation and non-illusion here by saying, 'It's just a film and we're never allowed to forget that': the *only* force of the incident derives from our impression of a car going over a human head. If I am right to feel that Godard doesn't share my distaste here, and doesn't realize I might feel it (and of course it is a demonstration that I have mis-read the *film* that I demand as refutation—not a personal statement from the director), then I can only express my concern that an artist so intelligent, so sensitive, so richly fertile, should also allow himself to be, at times, self-indulgent and irresponsible.

PIERROT LE FOU

Jose Luis Guarner

Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and Marianne (Anna Karina) escape from Paris to the South of France. He is leaving behind his boring but comfortable existence with a rich wife; she is running away from her involvement with gangs which work on the borders of crime and politics. In Provence, they live isolated from humanity in a tiny sea-side shack, but Marianne becomes increasingly restless and through a chance meeting is drawn back into her previous life. She telephones Ferdinand for help, but he arrives to find that she has gone, leaving behind the corpse of a midget. Two other gangsters torture him to discover where they can find Marianne. He meets her again in Toulon, and she involves him in an armed showdown between gangs. Discovering that Marianne intends to betray him, he pursues her and her 'brother' to their island hideout. In a gunfight, both Marianne and the 'brother' are killed. Ferdinand tries unsuccessfully to telephone his wife in Paris. He paints his face blue, wraps belts of high explosive around his head, and lights the fuse. He has just changed his mind about suicide when the charge explodes.

In a scene in *Pierrot le Fou*, Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) faces the audience and tells them that he has thought up the plot for a novel which would describe, not people's lives, but life itself, what exists between people's lives: space, sound, colours. When he is saying this, Ferdinand imitates Michel Simon, thus paying a small homage to the actor, referring to *La Chienne* (the Renoir film of which Ferdinand has just told the story) and drawing a parallel between Simon's story there and the story of Ferdinand and Marianne (Anna Karina): a man drawn by a girl into an odd adventure. In addition, Ferdinand's words not only express his wish to know reality more completely, but show, with an allusion to Joyce, the problems of literature and cinema as means of expression and stress a general tendency in Godard's style, revealing at the same time one of the most direct and immediate meanings of *Pierrot le Fou*. This enormous accumulation of references in a single static shot which lasts no more than thirty seconds exemplifies the structure of the film and its multiplicity of resonances. *Pierrot le Fou* is made up of a series of juxtaposed elements like the one which I have just described, each with an independent value and able to summarize in itself the content and meaning of the film. That is to say, *Pierrot le Fou* is like a big kaleidoscope, the many and ever changing components of which always add up to the same general image, which remains constant.

Like *Le Petit Soldat*, the essence of *Pierrot le Fou* is not action but reflection. It is symptomatic that the scenes of movement or violence in the film are hidden or only suggested. The dwarf Donovan aims at Marianne with a pistol while she plays with a pair of scissors: the two shots edited together and shot with a very wide angle lens is the only indication that the girl kills the dwarf (we have previously seen in her apartment another dead man with scissors stuck in his neck). Ferdinand is beaten up by the enemy agent to make him confess: in the film, while blows are heard off-screen, the image

shows only a Picasso picture which revolves slowly. The actions are often taken out of normal sequence, for example when shots of Ferdinand's and Marianne's flight from Paris alternate with shots of its planning. The final dénouement when Ferdinand kills the girl becomes a chaos of incomprehensible movements. One could say that the action shown in the film is not objective but subjective. Ferdinand Griffon looks at Marianne Renoir with love. The image of the girl is followed by two heads of Renoir and two pistols on the table. The events are not organized according to their sequence (which is only shown in a few more or less significant scenes) but according to their description and interpretation by the different characters. The flight from Paris is explained through an almost rhythmical recitative. The people they meet on their way to the south, a student, a shop assistant, a film extra, are all introduced ironically in a style of pseudo *cinéma-vérité*: they are asked their help and told stories about Nicolas de Staël, about William Wilson, about William of Orange's nephew, about Guynemer, or they are simply told about man, the seasons and unexpected meetings . . . The scene of the fight between two rival gangs at Toulon takes place in a small harbour as in Joseph Conrad, with a sailing boat as in Robert Louis Stevenson, an old casino as in William Faulkner, a steward changed into a millionaire as in Jack London . . . Ferdinand's words also substitute for a narrator: '*Chapitre 8, nous traversons la France*', etc.

In this sense, Godard follows Rossellini who, since 1950, has avoided shooting some scenes to escape from the slavery imposed by the logical links of cinema narration. Although Godard's previous films were orientated in the same way, *Pierrot le Fou* takes this to its ultimate extreme. The plot is constructed to accord with the characters of Ferdinand and Marianne, whose adventure is limited to a few fragments which do away with any superficial realism to concentrate on the relations between them. In this way, the spectator is encouraged to a fuller participation, being obliged to rebuild mentally the sequence of events. Godard has expressed very graphically the

Still: Marianne (Anna Karina) and Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) pursued by the gang.

Still: breakfast—Marianne (Anna Karina) and Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo).

nature of his intent by pointing out that '*Pierrot le Fou* shows us what is not seen in *Senso*'. That is to say, it is not a matter of showing people's lives but 'what there is between them'. His aim coincides completely with the words of Elie Faure on Velazquez, read by Ferdinand. Faure wrote that the artist in his maturity 'never painted a definite object' but the space between objects. This is the first sentence we hear in the film.

In general, the traditional cinema is based upon the depiction of events and characters that arouse an illusory identification in the spectators. But Godard, since his first film, has wanted to keep the spectator at a distance: cinematic reality is limited by the fact that the truth of appearances recorded by the camera (reproduction) is opposed by the fictional method of montage (interpretation). He has tried in this way constantly to remind the spectators that they are not watching real life but only a representation of it, a film. Through this voluntary limitation he wanted to avoid the

tricks of 'message', of the false problems of content, and to enable the spectator to see more clearly the characters (in a freer, more disorderly way, but perhaps nearer to life itself) and their implicit significance, which so many film makers would try to make as explicit as possible, i.e. as superficial as possible. In each film Godard has used a particular method of achieving 'distanciation' quite differently from Brecht's *Verfremdung*. In *A Bout de Souffle* it was the rigorous phenomenological description of Michel and Patricia; in *Le Petit Soldat* Bruno's interior monologue; in *Une Femme est une Femme* the stylization of musical comedy; in *Vivre sa Vie* the didactic division into chapters; in *Le Mépris* the epic description of the plot and the characters; in *Une Femme Mariée* the 'assemblage' of different elements, etc. *Pierrot le Fou* links several of these formulae in a most stimulating synthesis.

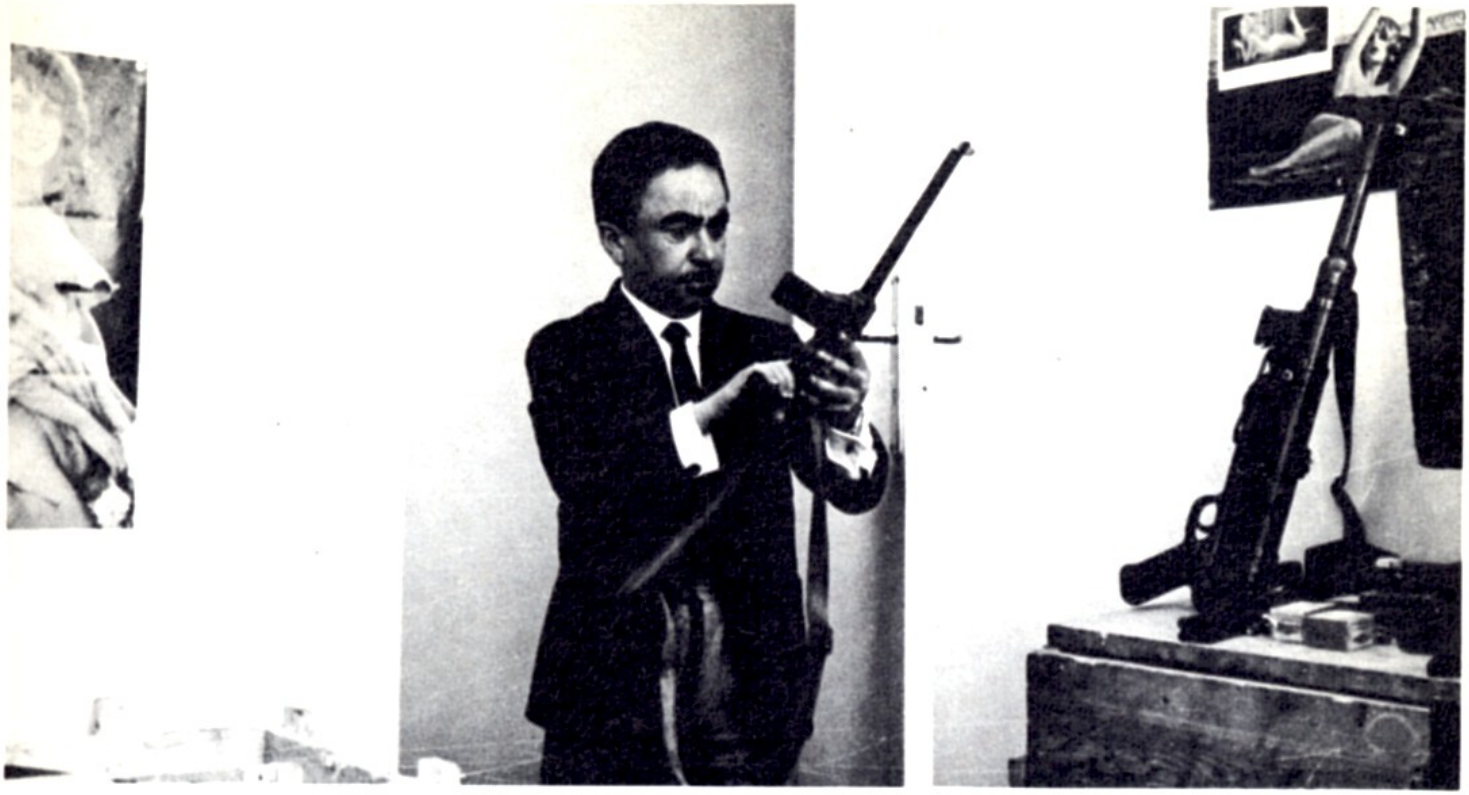
Pierrot le Fou consists essentially of what we could call a 'double monologue', in which Ferdinand and Marianne express their relationship, their attitudes to life, their feelings and ideas, in a confrontation which expresses their tragic inability to communicate. All their actions and thoughts are discussed between them, and explained to us, the spectators, and to themselves. In several momentary confidences, Marianne tells us that Ferdinand is selfish, that he spends all his money on books and won't allow her to buy a record player, that she doesn't know what he really is because she has shared with him only one or two million of the 250 million seconds that make up a life. The latter, in turn, criticizes Marianne because she only thinks of enjoying herself, does not know anything at all (not even who Pepe-le-Moko is) and he complains (a fundamental obsession in Godard's work) that when the girl says '*Il fait bon*', it is impossible for him to know what she is really thinking. The way of dealing with a simple scene where Ferdinand speaks with the falsely pathetic intonation of a schoolboy actor, reveals Godard's firm decision to reject any excess sentimentality with a humorous treatment that is not always free of cruelty. His aim of complete stylization is constant in every domain: the actors do not live but represent the characters they portray; the

Still: Marianne (Anna Karina) and Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) arrive by the sea.

Still: Marianne (Anna Karina), Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and Les Pieds Nickelés.

tone oscillates between the tragic, the comic and even the musical. With happy intuition, Godard has put music and dance into Marianne's fullest moments: the love song in the apartment and the dance in the woods by the sea are, in their simplicity, two of the most beautiful sequences of the film.

The relations between Ferdinand and Marianne incarnate once more in Godard's work the painful conflict between reality and fantasy. In *A Bout de Souffle*, Michel and Patricia were two adolescents trying to behave like adults; here Ferdinand and Marianne are two adults who try to behave like characters in fiction, thinking naïvely that they can thus avoid the mediocrity of their lives. Ferdinand, a reflective figure, tries to understand more of



Still: the midget (Jimmy Karoubi) in the pin-up-decorated armoury.

his own real being. Like Bruno Forestier or Paul Javal in *Le Mépris*, he tries to see himself through the eyes of a woman; he tries to play without conviction the role of Pierrot that Marianne wants to see in him. Marianne, a force of nature which seeks freedom in adventure, in violence (in the film she kills four men and knocks out several others), complains that life is not like fiction. Marianne, adorable and at the same time malefic, is one of the best examples of Godard's peculiar attitude towards women: a mixture of fascination and misogyny. The difference between the characters is spelt out quite clearly from the beginning of the film: Ferdinand buys books in the Quartier Latin and reads 'The History of Art' by Elie Faure; Marianne prefers a comic book, 'Les Pieds Nickelés'. Presented as autonomous blocs of reality, their opposition is constant and communication impossible.

In order to show the resonances of this conflict in every possible way, Godard has synthesised diverse elements, using the 'montage of attraction' to an extent that nobody has tried since Eisenstein; in this sense one could say that *Pierrot le Fou* is a super-*October*. In accordance with the formula, described above, the '*civilisation du cul*' discussed by Ferdinand is visualized ironically by an advertisement for Scandale corsets, while a vignette in 'Les Pieds Nickelés' is enough to evoke the spirit of adventure. The quotations and hints are innumerable, even more so than in Godard's previous films. Sometimes the quotations are literary, like the fragment of 'Guignol's Band' by Céline which Ferdinand reads on the island while he is climbing a tree and walking over the roof of his hut; the abundance of physical movement visually extends the meaning of the

text (it is amazing to see in such a subjective film the spontaneous splendour, the almost animal grace of movement of the actors). Other quotations are cinematographic, like the two shots from *Le Grand Escroc* in which Patricia films the Escroc, wondering where the fictitious character ends and where the real one begins. This is watched by Ferdinand in a cinema at Toulon while he is looking for Marianne, and for himself. Through the montage, there are incorporated in the action elements which have an almost subliminal effect: a sketched tiger, the letters SS, the syllable VIE in the word 'Riviera', the word CINE, etc. There are even very complex associations of ideas: Ferdinand crosses out of his diary the word '*mort*' and soon afterwards, following two drawings of anguished faces, the image appears of a mysterious lady with the title '*La Mort*', and before his suicide a look at his diary shows again in capitals the word *MORT* . . . One cannot help thinking of the momentary collision of words and images, so beloved by the surrealists, out

Still: midget (Jimmy Karoubi) with revolver, Marianne (Anna Karina) with scissors.

Still: Ferdinand/Pierrot (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and Marianne (Anna Karina).

of which comes the mystery of poetry. Godard could make his own the words of André Breton in the introduction of 'Nadja': '*le ton adopté pour le récit se calque sur celui de l'observation médicale, entre toutes neuropsychiatrique, qui tend à garder trace de tout ce qu'examen et interrogatoire peuvent livrer, sans l'embarrasser en le rapportant le moindre apprêt quant au style.*'

Pierrot le Fou, however, achieves its most specific dimension when, thanks to this technique, there is superimposed on Ferdinand's monologue a personal confession by Godard. Ferdinand tries vainly to reach a clearer vision through constant meditation, by means of which Godard himself addresses the spectators. One might even say that Ferdinand's objectivity expresses Godard's subjectivity. At the surprise-party, Samuel Fuller explains to Godard, not to Ferdinand, his personal ideas of cinema: 'The film is like a battle-ground: love, hate, action, violence, death . . . In one word, *emotion*.' It is Godard

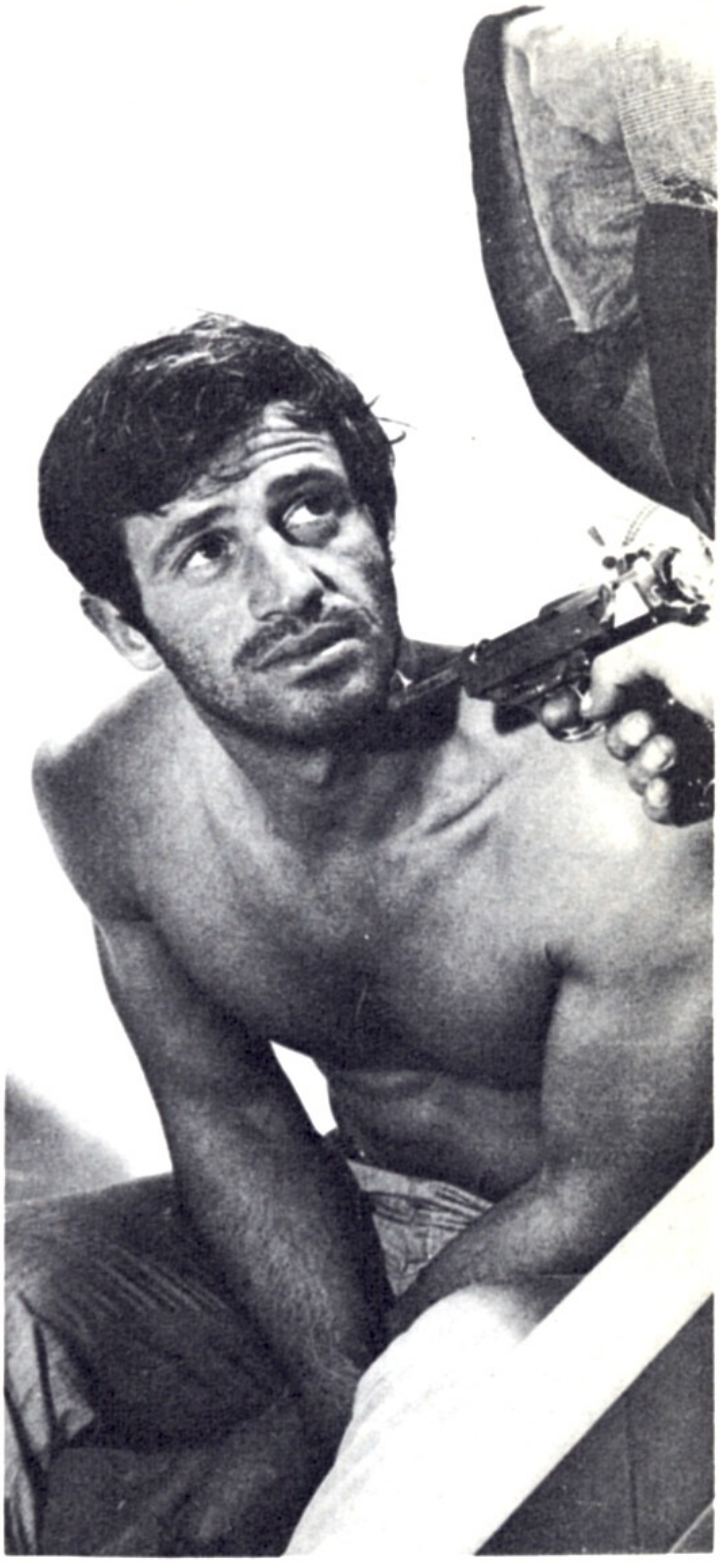
who addresses us when Ferdinand explains his idea for a novel. The process is particularly obvious in Ferdinand's return to a Robinson Crusoe life. After abandoning the civilized world (a transition underlined in a very long take which starts with the car ablaze and shows Ferdinand and Marianne going away across a field) to return to nature, Ferdinand tries to rationalize the step, which is very important to him, by writing a diary. This collection of disordered impressions (which is much like a painter's or writer's notebook) might well be part of Godard's own diary during the shooting of *Pierrot le Fou* and even the writing seems to be his. In this respect *Pierrot le Fou* is like a book which reaches the reader complete with observations written in the margin by the author. (This practice seems to have been taken to an extreme in *Made in U.S.A.*)

The chaotic, violent struggle of *Pierrot le Fou* is, on the other hand, an image of the world he tries to describe. The universe surrounding Ferdinand and Marianne is as threatening as it is absurd. The guests at the surprise-party speak like characters in a commercial, as did Charlotte and Pierre when they showed Roger Leenhardt their apartment in *Une Femme Mariée*. The polychrome lights of the motorway, reflected in the screen of Ferdinand's car, suggest the closed and disquieting world of science fiction. Marianne's apartment contains reproductions of famous pictures, as well as rifles and sub-machine guns propped up in the corners, and a dead man on a bed, to whom nobody pays particular attention. In the dancing club, the man from Fontainebleau greets Ferdinand kindly in spite of the fact that Ferdinand had borrowed 100,000 francs from him and gone to bed with his wife. The old Princess Abadir, Queen of Lebanon in exile, looks for shelter at Toulon against the attacks of her hypothetical enemies. The man in the harbour (Raymond Devos) tells Ferdinand the ridiculous story in which is implicit the cruellest loneliness . . . The references to Vietnam, to Santo Domingo, to the Arab Countries, as well as the fable of White and Eleonor on the moon, show clearly chaos and violence both in our planet and outside it. Ferdinand tries to escape from this dead universe with Marianne who tells him the story of a man who leaves Paris because he has seen death and goes south to escape from it: exactly the story of Ferdinand himself. He seeks liberty through illogicality: the escape with the girl, letting his money burn in the blazing car, leaving the straight line and taking the curve to drive his car into the sea, walking along the middle of a river instead of along the bank, entering a dancing club through a window and not through the door . . . Through this deliberate confusion, Godard tries to achieve in his work some of the spontaneity of life and to unveil its mysteries. But he explicitly recognizes that his wish is as impossible as his characters' escape into nature. The incidental writings shown by Godard in Pierrot's diary are almost illegible because words have less power of expression than images, and his aim of rationalizing will only get to bore Marianne 'because you talk to me with words and I look at you with feelings'. After the failure of his experience, when he abandons his island, his lost paradise, Ferdinand (Godard) will note in his diary (film) the tragic discovery that even when one knows who people are and where they are going, everything still remains mysterious . . .

Godard's permanent conflict between reality and fantasy, between action and contemplation, reaches in *Pierrot le Fou* its most horrible climax. After killing Marianne, the desperate Ferdinand decides to do away with his double, Pierrot, in an act of self-destruction like that of William Wilson. In a ritual ceremony he paints his face Velazquez blue (or maybe Renoir blue),

and, with it changed into a hallucinatory Greek mask, he runs to find a red and yellow death. Godard seems to have wanted in some way to mitigate the brutality of this admirable scene by ending his film with a quote, like Mizoguchi in *Yang Kwei Fei*. The lines from the poem 'Eternité' by Rimbaud suggest an improbable meeting of Ferdinand and Marianne beyond death. *Pierrot le Fou* (a new sentimental journey to the South) seems to place the whole *oeuvre* of Godard under the sign of romanticism.

From an incredible avalanche of elements and materials, *Pierrot le Fou* finally emerges as a very coherent work: the narrative of a tragic adventure combined with the intimate diary of its protagonist, prolonged (as is customary with Godard) into a meditation by the author on his creation and on the expressiveness of cinema. In its theme and style it may be considered as a summation which explains and completes all Godard's previous films: in short, a real cinematic testament. The extreme speed of its shooting (it was begun in May 1965, apparently without a script or any other reference than a 'Série Noire' novel by Lionel White) made it possible for it to be shown in the Venice Mostra at the beginning of September. The amazing ease with which the director integrates the most disparate elements with his own personal world, qualifies Godard without doubt as an exceptional personality in the cinema. *Pierrot le Fou* paradoxically synthesizes the most literary and the most cinematic, the most intellectual and the most spontaneous, the most theoretical and the most concrete, in one of the most original and suggestive works of contemporary cinema. A fuller analysis of its meaning would take many pages: it is enough to foresee that *Pierrot le Fou* will, within a few years, be an invaluable document on our time and on our contradictions.



Still: Michel in the torture sequence.

PIERROT LE FOU

Paul Mayersberg

Pierrot le Fou is the best and the worst of Jean-Luc Godard. The Best: life as a pretext for cinema. The Worst: cinema as a pretext for life. A Godardian contradiction. *Pierrot le Fou* is about a way of life which becomes a screen genre and about a screen genre which becomes a way of life. It is about living on the border between the law and anarchy. The film begins in Paris and the action moves south, south of the border, to the Mediterranean. Godard has always been fascinated by the life-genre of the gangster movie: *A Bout de Souffle*, *Le Petit Soldat*, *Vivre sa Vie*, *Bande à Part*, *Alphaville*, and *Made in U.S.A. Les Carabiniers* was intended as a war movie, but it more closely resembles those movies which depict small wars made to order, gang wars. Godard's films are gangster movies like Sam Fuller's pictures are war movies (whether they take place in peacetime or not). Fuller appears in *Pierrot* at a party where he expounds his view of life as a battleground. This movie is a story of guns, girls and gangsters, but behind it or perhaps in front of it, it is also a story of books, music and paintings. Pierrot (Belmondo) is a Picasso clown and the girl, Marianne, (Karina) is a Renoir girl. Can they live together in real life as easily as on an art gallery wall? The gangster genre is not enough for Godard. He must have more significance, more meaning, more implications. And that's a pity: his later films tend to disintegrate as you watch them. When you come out of *Pierrot le Fou* you have to pick up the pieces and try (probably unsuccessfully) to put the picture back together again. He has abandoned the discipline of a narrative line and lost the coherence that comes from continuity. For a man who is always talking about the essential 'meaning' of cinema, this is ironic. Cinema is continuity. Hitchcock's pure cinema: shots put together like words to form a sentence. Film runs through a projector, starts at the beginning and goes on till it comes to the end. Godard's answer to old Clouzot, who asked him whether he didn't think a movie should have a beginning, a middle and an end, was brilliant: 'Yes' said Godard, 'but not necessarily in that order.' Brilliant, but wrong. Clouzot is right about the cinema being a story medium but he makes dreadful films. *Pierrot le Fou* is brilliant but wrong. A stream of colour shots, beautiful, the Mallarmé of the cinema. But we don't want poetry on the screen: we want stories, action and characters. The great lesson of Resnais' last picture, *La Guerre est Finie*, is how much better a film-maker Resnais is when he is intent (a) on telling a story and (b) on presenting a character. In *A Bout de Souffle* Belmondo was a character for the audience. In *Pierrot le Fou* he is a figment of Godard's imagination with little substance for the spectator. The reason why Pierrot blows himself to pieces at the end of the movie is because he has no reality. Like the film he himself is made up of fragments. Godard talks of his love and admiration of the American cinema, the basis of which is the concept of genre. But the genre of gangster movies, while fascinating to him, doesn't meet his requirements. And what happens is that he comes up against its laws. He finds himself in the difficult position of being critical of the genre

in which he's working. He is not a craftsman. He fancies himself as an artist, and worse, as a spokesman of his age. *Pierrot le Fou* is a film about gangster films: the way in which the images are arranged and charged with allusions creates a film which has a built-in critique of itself. Godard has always been the critic making films, but now it seems that he's never going to be a professional film-maker. He's a home movies man because finally it doesn't matter to him whether his films are shown in a cinema with an audience or not. His films are becoming a private art, always interesting, often exciting, but only to friends and relations. Godard trying to be hip is getting out of touch with the world. *Pierrot* and *Alphaville* are both movies about a man in conflict with an alien world. In *Pierrot le Fou* the world doesn't care. The film is set on the French riviera, a natural, careless world of sun and danger and death in the afternoon. *Alphaville* is unnatural, a city at night, Paris 1984. They are alien worlds, not like Antonioni's pictures of alienated modern man, but alien in the sense of another planet, another race, another time. *Alphaville* is actually presented as science fiction. *Pierrot le Fou* is an adventure in time and space and dream. The heroes in both movies are men; the people they come into conflict with are zombies. At the centre of each film is a love story. In *Alphaville* Eddie Constantine makes it his business to free Anna Karina from the hell of a world without love. The climax of the movie comes when she says: 'Je . . . vous aime'. So she is a woman, not a zombie. In *Pierrot*, Belmondo discovers at the end that the girl he loves (again Anna Karina) is a zombie. Like *A Bout de Souffle*, *Pierrot* is about a girl betraying a man. Betrayal is perhaps Godard's major human theme: people are always betraying each other in his films; the girl in *Une Femme Mariée* betrays he husband, *Les Carabiniers* betray each other, *Le Petit Soldat* is about political and personal betrayal and Anna Karina in *Vivre sa Vie* is betrayed by her ponce. Godard belongs to the French youth betrayed generation. And that generation turned out to be very sentimental about itself. Godard, the professed admirer of hard-edged American life, is really a softy. He ultimately prefers Tarzan and the sub-human savage innocent to the super-humanity of I.B.M., because to him Tarzan looks like a man and not like a data processing zombie.

Still: Ferdinand Griffon (Jean-Paul Belmondo) in the Vietnam sequence of Pierrot le Fou.

PIERROT LE FOU

Michael Walker

The credits to *Pierrot le Fou* are printed out alphabetically, which, in so far as the method is essentially the same as that used by a computer to 'print out', evokes *Alphaville*. But it is very much a *lyrical* evocation, with the red and blue lettering and Duhamel's haunting theme, which sets the mood: in taking up the story of the escape from Alphaville in a different time, and with a different couple, Godard strives above all for a lyricism which will counteract the doom-laden atmosphere. This idea of *Pierrot* as a continuation (in parallel, if you like) of *Alphaville* illustrates one of the richest aspects of the film. More than any other Godard movie it seems to grow out of his previous works. His subsequent films have tended to become more and more isolated from his past, but *Pierrot* contains so much of Godard's past that it seems to be, at one level, almost a digest of his key pre-occupations.

For example, the fantasy of escape—from Paris/Alphaville/dehumanized urban society—has haunted him since *A Bout de Souffle*. At the end of *Bande à Part* we are promised 'next episode, in CinemaScope and Technicolor, Franz and Odile in the tropics', but, more directly than this, the escape of Ferdinand and Marianne from Paris to the south seems to be a fulfilment of Michel's plans in *A Bout de Souffle*. In his drive from Marseille to Paris at the beginning of the film we hear him outline the plans: 'First collect the dough, then ask Patricia yes or no; then Milano, Roma . . .' But Michel and Patricia don't make the trip, partly because of his insistence on 'getting the dough' first, and partly because of her refusal to go with him. So in a sense Ferdinand, who couldn't care less about money, and Marianne, who will go with him whilst there is the promise of adventure, make it for them. The link between the two films is underlined in Marianne's reference to the date when she previously knew Ferdinand: 'Five and a half years; it was October' when *A Bout de Souffle* was being made.

Equally *Pierrot* can be seen to have grown out of other Godard films. (Some of these developments will be considered in more detail later.) Its subjective/reflective structure is a development of that of *Le Petit Soldat*. *Une Femme est Une Femme* contains the origins of its red/blue colour scheme, developed further in *Le Mépris*. The party from which Ferdinand flees is the logical product of the advertisement-hypnotised society which we saw in *Une Femme Mariée*. There is even a development from *Les Carabiniers*: *Pierrot* too is a film made against a background of war . . .

The characters of Ferdinand and Marianne are perhaps the most complete examples of this development. Although they have points in common with their predecessors, their characterisations are more complex than any of them, and their relationship seems to be more a summation of Godard's feelings about man-woman relationships than related to any specific examples in his past. I think the 'autobiographical overtones' suggest this most strongly. Ferdinand seems to be closer to Godard's own personality than any other 'self-projection' in his films, and Marianne was in effect his last incarnation of *Anna-mariée*. (In *Made in USA* all rapport between director and actress has

utterly vanished.) A recurring Godard 'autobiographical theme'—the ambiguity of the heroine's feelings/the difficulty the hero has in understanding her—seems to be expressed with greater intensity in *Pierrot* than in the other films in which it is found. Certainly no other Godard couple has been given such an opportunity to make a relationship work as have Ferdinand and Marianne. The characterisations of the other couples who achieve 'freedom' (Franz and Odile; Lemmy and Natasha) are such that there is little prospect of a mature relationship developing: the endings to these films (*Bande à Part* and *Alphaville*) are essentially 'fairy-tale'. By contrast Ferdinand and Marianne are characters with the awareness and *potential* to develop a mature relationship; and their 'escape to freedom' is an achievement with which we can closely identify.

For these reasons it seems to me that the story of Ferdinand and Marianne's journey to the Midi was especially personal to Godard. He has said that he wanted to film the story of '*le dernier couple romantique*', but we only have to think of the other films which belong to this 'genre' to see the hopeless romanticism of his intention. *Tabu*, *Man's Castle*, *Modern Times*, *You Only Live Once*, *They Live by Night* and *Bonnie and Clyde* (even *Elvira Madigan*) are amongst the most powerfully affecting love stories of the screen; but such all-consuming love affairs are inconceivable in Godard's world. Like the couples in these films, Ferdinand and Marianne try to live outside society, and their attempt is as doomed as most of the others. But in none of the films was this the result of a betrayal by one of the lovers, as it is in *Pierrot*.

Marianne's betrayal of Ferdinand is the central tragedy of *Pierrot*. Again this is an obsession from Godard's past, but never has it seemed so close to expressing the director's own anguish as here. Retrospectively we have heard how his marriage with Anna Karina was breaking up at that time, and there are two moments in *Pierrot* which are tragically revealing. The first occurs during the idyll by the sea, when Ferdinand asks Marianne anxiously, 'You're sure you'll never leave me ?'. Although she repeats 'Quite sure', she is unable to meet the probing look of the camera and she drops her gaze. Godard uses a similar technique with his camera in *Une Femme est Une Femme*, when Angela comes back to Emile, having been to bed with Alfred. The camera, subjectively for Emile, approaches her, and the way in which she averts her face and moves away expresses her feeling of guilt. But in *Pierrot* at this point the camera is not used subjectively for Ferdinand, and we feel the poignancy—it was Godard's look that Marianne-Anna could not meet when she replied.

The other such moment is when Marianne, explaining why it was not surprising that Ferdinand didn't know her (he'd only spent one or two million seconds with her out of a lifetime of 250 billion) finishes by looking into the camera and saying 'I don't know who you are either'. Whether it was she or Godard who was responsible for this, again the likelihood of it having personal implications is very strong. Although it is always tempting to look for details in Godard's films which betray his real-life relationship with Anna Karina, I know of no other moments which express such a direct feeling of 'personal separateness' as these. They seem almost painfully personal.

Inseparable from this is Godard's acute difficulty in communicating. In all his films we sense this, particularly in the stumbling attempts of his characters to converse, attempts which have been progressively abandoned in favour of monologues (telling each other stories, even reading aloud from books) and interviews. Time and again we hear Godard's characters complain that they cannot tell from people's faces what they are really thinking, and here Ferdinand

says it of Marianne, concluding with 'All I have is this image of her saying "*Il fait beau*" '. Confronted with the problem of communication, Godard seems to become petrified by his own inadequacy. His camera looks at Anna with love, but however hard he has tried to penetrate more deeply, he has only shown us an external portrait. Paul, in *Vivre sa Vie*, told us Godard's wish: to 'strip away the exterior to reveal the interior, and strip away the interior to reveal the soul'. But the soul has always eluded him. One is left with the image of her eyes averting before the gaze of his camera as a tragic testament to his inability to reach her.

For the sake of clarity, one should perhaps distinguish these moments, where Godard seems to be using the camera subjectively for himself, from others where his characters 'address' the camera. Briefly, there are three other distinct uses. First, asides to the audience, which worked originally as 'distanciation devices', although I doubt that they have this effect now. Second, monologues—Ferdinand and Marianne each have a private monologue in *Pierrot*, to tell us what each thinks/feels about the other; monologues are unprompted and can, as here, be informative. Finally, interviews, which are prompted and consequently are almost invariably informative. An element of accusation tends to creep into Godard's interviews: *vide* that of Robert towards the end of *Une Femme Mariée* (much more interesting than Pierre's monologue earlier in the film) and of 'Mademoiselle 19 Ans' in *Masculin-Féminin*. The element of accusation in the way in which the camera (in the scenes described) confronts Anna Karina in *Une Femme est Une Femme* and *Pierrot* is not dissimilar. Godard has said 'Film is like a personal diary, a note-book or a monologue by someone who tries to justify himself before a camera that is almost an accuser, like one does before a lawyer or psychiatrist'. And, he himself can be the accuser.

This observation by Godard seems particularly pertinent to *Pierrot*, and also *Le Petit Soldat*: both films centre round introspective heroes who endeavour to find some meaning in their lives. A comparison between the two films from this point of view indicates one line of development in Godard's work. *Le Petit Soldat* acquires its 'reflective structure' through the use of Bruno's commentary. This effectively puts the film in flash-back, with Bruno commenting on his past actions: his comments often sound as if made whilst watching a run-through of the film. Here the 'attempt at justification' is retrospective, emphasised in the first words of the film: 'For me, the time for action is over . . . The time for reflection begins'. The commentary in *Pierrot* is quite different. Not only is it shared between Ferdinand and Marianne, but it has none of this sense of reflection: indeed much of the time it is in the present tense. Much more it is used to heighten the impressions of the moment: throughout the film it is bound up with the couple, telling of their fortunes and echoing their feelings. In this context, mention should be made of the quotations which Godard introduces so lavishly into the commentary. Although many of these remain unidentified, for me this does not in the least lessen their effect. Knowing that it is Browning the couple are quoting as they emerge from the sand, or Rimbaud at the end of the film doesn't really enhance these scenes; the important point is that the quotations should enrich the film in context simply through their 'poetic content', and most of them do, beautifully. In particular the commentary is used to reflect Ferdinand's growing despair. We find this in his questions to Marianne about her relationship with Frank (she says 'I'll explain', but never does), his almost obsessive repeating of the lines from Lorca when he loses her '*Le sang je ne veux pas le voir . . . Quel terrible cinq heures de soir*'; his sudden agonised whisper during the

bowling-alley scene 'Why are you double-crossing me?'

And throughout the film the spoken chapter headings echo his feelings 'Next chapter—Despair. . .'

In *Pierrot* the reflective aspect, the attempt to find meaning, is founded in the use of Ferdinand's diary. Godard has said: '*Anna représente la vie active et lui la vie contemplative. C'est pour les opposer. . . je voulais donner, par le biais du journal, le sentiment de la reflexion*'. The effect here is much less organised than in *Le Petit Soldat*. The sense in the earlier film of 'putting experience into perspective' is quite absent: more so in view of the fact that it is his spontaneous thoughts which Ferdinand writes in his diary. This in itself is not necessarily a loss, however, more a commitment by Godard to the present tense: a recognition that it is our thoughts/responses/impulses of the moment which reveal us most clearly. Certainly *Pierrot* is a film in which the immediacy of a present tense is vividly conveyed. However, Godard is so determined to maintain the sense of immediacy that often he flashes gobbets of diary on the screen so quickly that we barely have time to read them, let alone assimilate them. Under those conditions we can scarcely claim to be participating in '*le sentiment de la reflexion*'.

This illustrates one danger of Godard's cinematic development: the way in which his filming of events spontaneously can lead to incoherence. Before considering this in relation to *Pierrot* however, I would like to place the film in his *oeuvre* from the *emotional* point of view. Again *Le Petit Soldat* provides a key comparison, because, in the personal relationship sense, it is probably as autobiographical as *Pierrot*. The sense of despair I mentioned in the later film is a primary distinction between them. Although Veronica is brutally killed at the end of *Le Petit Soldat*, Godard finishes on a hopeful note, with Bruno determined to 'learn not to be bitter'. This contrasts strongly with the desperate ending of *Pierrot*, with Ferdinand shooting Marianne and then commiting suicide. The despair is reflected in another crucial distinction between the two films. In *Le Petit Soldat* the lovers are torn apart by external (political) forces, which are also responsible for Veronica's death. The rival gun-running gangs in *Pierrot* play much the same role as the political extremist groups in

Still: Ferdinand shoots Marianne.

the earlier film, except that the destruction of Marianne and Ferdinand is not caused by them but by Marianne's betrayal.

The sense of despair is a key pointer to the emotional development of Godard's cinema. *Alphaville* suggested the possibility of an 'escape to happiness'; *Pierrot* shows that Godard no longer believes this. The autobiographical overtones underline the intensely personal nature of the doomed journey unto paradise. Never again will Godard even contemplate such a journey. But there has been a more drastic development in his films since *Pierrot*. The very act of despairing presupposes an emotional response to the events depicted, but, after *Pierrot* (here *Masculin-Féminin* is the key transitional film) Godard has moved progressively to a position of emotional isolation, refusing to expose himself to the anguish of 'feeling'. Because of this, he has been able to produce the uncompromisingly brutal vision of humanity in *Weekend*, but such a vision must, by its very rejection of all human feeling, be remote from our experience, even our potential experience. My preference for *Pierrot* over *Weekend* is ultimately a preference for a film which, however awkwardly, expresses the feelings and responses of its maker over one in which these have been repressed.

In many respects *Pierrot* is a key transitional work in Godard's *oeuvre*. I have illustrated the extent to which it draws from his past, but an immediate impression of the film is that stylistically it is much more adventurous than Godard's previous works. If these tended to possess the traditional properties of a feature film (plot, narrative continuity, character, dialogue, homogeneity of style) at least to some extent, *Pierrot* marks, if not an overt rejection of these, at least a subordination of them to more abstract stylistic conceptions. In this respect it paves the way for Godard's later works, which have continued to break down the traditional concepts of 'the way a film should be made'. There are however dangers in this development. I think it is clear that Godard is breaking the rules in order to achieve the maximum freedom of artistic expression which is, to him, important: he is an experimenter in film, testing the properties and potential of the medium. There is however a great risk of attendant disintegration and incoherence. I have already mentioned how, in *Pierrot*, Godard's tendency to film his 'spontaneous impressions of reality' can lead to incoherence. But *Pierrot* is sustained (as his subsequent films are not) by the fact that Godard is filming *as he feels*; the film thereby acquires an emotional coherence which overrides the sense of disintegration. It is perhaps even possible to distinguish separate elements of the film which contribute to this. Probably the most immediately striking one is the vivid sense of 'poetry' which the film carries. Paul Mayersberg's rejection of this in favour of 'stories, action, characters' is unfortunate, not just because I think he is rejecting one of the prime beauties of the film, but because he implies that the two entities are mutually exclusive. Surely *Pierrot* is not devoid of 'story, action and character', it is just that Godard tends to subordinate them to the 'poetic rhythms' of the film. A good example is the scene of the yacht deal/double-cross, which is edited so quickly that we cannot really follow the mechanics of the plot. Here our confusion mirrors Ferdinand's, caught up in the compulsive rhythm of events he cannot understand, whilst Marianne, coolly detached, accepts her role as assassin.

There are several sequences in *Pierrot* which seem to me to have a dazzling sense of poetry. One of these is the escape from Marianne's flat which is edited to show the actual getaway (from the dwarf and the gun-running heavies) repeated in different ways. Richard Roud, in his book on Godard, describes this as 'the first

sequence ever shot in the conditional tense', but this is only one way of rationalising the sequence verbally. More important is the way in which we *respond* to it: its rhythmic editing, its matter-of-fact dislocation of time, the nervous energy of its images. It is this sequence which precipitates Ferdinand into Marianne's world of 'sound and fury', and I find it has almost a nightmare effect: we feel the compulsion of the characters to escape and yet they have to keep repeating their efforts in order to achieve this. We experience a sense of disorientation, which becomes a characteristic of all the sequences involving the gun-runners.

Nowhere is this sense of disorientation more complete than in the sequence of the second encounter with the 'rival' gang. When Marianne rings Ferdinand and asks him to come at once (to her rescue) successive images show: Ferdinand running along the shore right to left—Marianne on the phone urging him to come—Ferdinand running along the shore left to right, on which image Godard zooms out (twice) to a high shot over the bay and then pans round to show Marianne standing next to the camera on the hotel-room balcony. Ferdinand's sprint is taking him past the hotel, away from her. Here the images express Ferdinand's total confusion with a terrible clarity.

Yet I find that, despite our spatial and temporal disorientation, these sequences have an inner unity, deriving from what I can only call their 'poetic rhythm'. Even the 'pop-art punctuations' of film posters, cartoon figures, paintings, etc., which Godard tends to introduce in the manner of a collage between sequences (often with accompanying narrative) seem to have a rhythmic presentation which integrates them into the 'feel' of the film. The neon-sign interpolations, which, as distanciation devices, are usually cut *into* a sequence, are more disruptive—but not distractingly so.

In imposing a unity of tone on an individual sequence the score is frequently invaluable. In *Alphaville* it is a major force in sustaining the emotional unity of the film, and Duhamel's score here has much the same atmosphere as that in the earlier film: evoking the 'dark, fatalistic' Steiner scores for the *films noirs* of the 'forties. Just as the column of black smoke drifting across from the blazing car clouds the first steps of the couple's journey back to nature, so the score of *Pierrot* charges the film with an atmosphere of impending doom.

Before coming to the most central source of the emotional unity of *Pierrot*, one aspect of the structuring of the film should be mentioned. Here Godard seems to have attempted what was, for him, a particularly difficult task: both to show his characters objectively (in relation to their environment and each other) and subjectively (expressing their feelings) *at the same time*. In one of the most beautiful scenes, Marianne happily sings a love-song to Ferdinand in one room of her flat, whilst in the next room, beneath the Modigliani-reproduction and amidst the armoury of guns, lies the body of one of her scissors-slain victims. Here Marianne's song expresses the fleeting happiness of the moment superbly, but by showing us the body in the next room just before it, Godard confers a modifying complexion on the scene: we are already a little wary of Marianne. The sequence should not perhaps be taken naturalistically, but rather as a vivid short-hand which conveys directly the impressions which Godard requires. Another example is the party at the beginning where we find conversation reduced to the level of mindless reiteration of advertising clichés. This is both Ferdinand's subjective vision and Godard's stylised expression of what he sees as a growing malaise; the sequence crystallises the sterility of the society in which Ferdinand is obliged to live.

Though *Pierrot* is a film full of abrupt

changes in mood, these are welded to the couple's own mood changes. There are exceptions, notably the scenes of violence, which tend to be forced upon them. But, if we consider a random sample of the other abrupt changes in mood—Ferdinand at the party suddenly hurling a suitably textured confection over his wife and guests; Marianne's song; the joy with which he greets the first appearance of the sea; her '*Qu'est-ce que j'peux faire?*'; her rage at Ferdinand when he rejects her record—all arise as direct expressions of the very human feelings of the characters. So, if we can respond with the couple at an emotional level, then the film assumes a natural emotional coherence. This may not be easy in a Godard film, but we are more drawn to Ferdinand and Marianne than to other Godard couples. Most of us would not feel for them as intensely as we feel for Bonnie and Clyde, but we would identify strongly with their gesture: their rejection of the stifling conformity of society; their celebration of freedom; their search for a lost happiness. In addition, Ferdinand and Marianne really struggle to express their feelings, and this also works to involve us. Godard has always found it difficult to express the deeper emotions, and *Pierrot* is one of his few films where we feel the hero really *cares*. The scene where Ferdinand reads from Guignol's Band (described by José Luis Guarner) emerges as a passionate attempt to express his feelings for Marianne in gesture as well as word. And he is genuinely upset after their quarrel over her record, which leads to the rather touching moment when, in his hurry to catch Marianne up and reconcile, he momentarily collides against her on the beach. Such a moment, slight in itself, is eloquent in a Godard film.

One senses that it is Godard's hypersensitivity which makes him so reticent about expressing deeper emotions and leads him so often to the use of oblique techniques, such as words rather than gestures (e.g. the first car scene in *Pierrot*, where the 'words of love' are spoken by Ferdinand and Marianne without even looking at one another). An extreme example of this technique is the Raymond Devos episode. Because Godard is unable to express Ferdinand's distress directly at this moment, he chooses a man whose mind has become stuck in one groove, driving him crazy, to tell *his* tragedy to

Still: after Marianne and her brother have escaped by boat, Ferdinand meets a man (Raymond Devos) who tells him a story.

Ferdinand. Yet it seems that, as an emotional outlet for Ferdinand's distress, the story is just too funny to be relevant. It is only retrospectively that we understand how the encounter is crucial to Ferdinand's development, because from it he absorbs the terrifying implication that, to those subjected to an intolerable pressure, madness is the last refuge.

And so, having shot Marianne, he 'goes mad': painting his face blue, howling despairingly (the sound is very close to that uttered by Raymond Devos) and wrapping dynamite round his face. It is only at this point that he finally surrenders to the role of 'Pierrot le Fou' conferred upon him by Marianne, but he has lit the fuse before he realises, in a flash of lucidity, what he has done. He tries in vain to extinguish it . . .

Pierrot is Ferdinand's '*homme double*', but he persistently denies the role throughout the film. (*Every* time Marianne calls him 'Pierrot' he tells her his name is Ferdinand.) Yet, in his monologue, he says that 'We are living in the age of double men . . . have no need for mirrors to talk to ourselves'. Although there are schizophrenic overtones to this, Ferdinand displays his greater awareness than Michel (*A Bout de Souffle*) and Arthur (*Bande à Part*) by recognising and refusing to be bound to his '*homme double*'. (When he does participate in Marianne's '*vie active*'—the yacht deal—he is clearly only doing so in order to obtain the means to escape.) The tragic/grotesque death throes of Michel and Arthur were the logical result of their adoption of 'fantasy-roles' (a recurring Godard theme) which they insisted on playing out to the end. Ferdinand's is the final, despairing surrender to such a role, in a moment of great anguish.

Just as Marianne wants Ferdinand to be 'Pierrot le Fou', so he wants her to be Marianne Renoir (we're never sure if that is her surname). And in her case she can, on occasions, be a full, sensuous Renoir woman—as in the scene in her flat when she sings to him, and Godard isolates her in the image with a post-card of a Renoir painting. But equally there is the other side of Marianne, the tormented, fragmented Picasso woman, with whom we have just seen her linked in connection with the body in the back room (when she looks at it she is next to a Picasso reproduction). The Renoir woman recurs during Ferdinand's story of summer and the sea (told to the onlookers at the cafe in central France); we see a Renoir nude over his words 'lovers craving the warm night air'. In the scene of the moon parable, which ends with Marianne sensuously responding to Ferdinand's words and caresses, she is, I think, identified with this painting: the poses are very similar. But, after their summer idyll, the Picasso woman takes over. In the dwarf's hotel room there are two Picasso reproductions with which Marianne is specifically identified in the surrealistic (wide-angle lens) shot of her wielding scissors before the camera. In this shot she is placed between the two Picasso women, whereas in the equivalent shot of the dwarf wielding his gun the background is plain. The association of these paintings with violence is definitively established when Ferdinand arrives in the hotel room. At the moment when the two heavies advance on him, he is shown trapped in the image between the two reproductions, and, as the men seize him, Godard zooms to a close-up of one painting which inverts as Ferdinand cries out in pain. This forms a crucial link to the final scene, where Ferdinand identifies *himself* with Picasso's Pierrot: in Picasso's 'Pierrot and Harlequin' Pierrot has a blue face.

Although one would not wish to make too much of these artistic associations, they do indicate the cultural density of *Pierrot*. Of course the film is replete with cultural references, but most of these seem to be simply

references/associations which arose in Godard's mind at the time of filming. Although I find that they enrich the film, I cannot in general claim that they do so in any *profound* sense.

There is one reference however which has to be considered in depth: the opening quotation from Elie Faure's '*Histoire de l'Art*'. Godard has stated that this defined the subject of the film: '*il ne faut pas décrire les gens, mais décrire ce qu'il y a entre eux*'. I'm not sure how he hoped to achieve this. My first thought was that, in so far as Ferdinand and Marianne fail to establish a common ground for communication (her often-quoted 'You speak to me with words and I look at you with emotions') Godard was concentrating on filming the psychological 'space between them'. After Marianne has made her accusation, the couple resolve to try

Stills: Marianne, Picasso and 'la vie active'.

and have a conversation: they begin by telling each other the things they like. Each manages to think of four examples, but, although some of these seem to be surprisingly out of character (e.g. Marianne's liking for flowers and animals; Ferdinand's for ambition) this exhausts their resources of communication and Marianne leaves Ferdinand ('I was right five years ago') to continue her walk along the shore. At this point Godard cuts to a medium long-shot of the couple, and pans with Marianne as she leaves Ferdinand, physically stressing the separation. He then dwells on the resultant image of Marianne walking away from the camera, which places her midway between Ferdinand on the extreme left of the screen and the bright red door of their hut high on the extreme right. This not only emphasises the separation between them as a result of their inability to communicate, but also suggests a symbolic positioning of Marianne between Ferdinand and the door: she is, at this moment, saying '*Qu'est-ce que j'peux faire ?*'. And the association of bright red with the violence of Marianne's '*vie active*' is established in the film repeatedly. (At the moment when she goes off with the dwarf, Godard even has Ferdinand walk past a red notice which warns: '*Danger de mort*'.) The implications of the image are clear; one's only regret is that their attempt to communicate on this occasion should be so half-hearted.

Marianne's longing for her '*vie active*' is forcing her separation from Ferdinand. Shortly after this scene she pleads with him to return to it: 'We've had enough of Jules Verne, let's get back to our *roman policier*—fast cars, guns, night-clubs'. A little later, in her monologue, having miraculously acquired a bright red dress, she tells us 'I just want to live'. And when she does re-encounter the rival gun-runners, the images of separation become violent. The shot which begins with a zoom out on Ferdinand

Still: Ferdinand and Marianne.

sprinting past the hotel creates a sense of dislocation which is almost physically jolting. Later examples can be seen in the kiss Ferdinand and Marianne exchange between two cars driven in opposite directions, and of course the final image of separation: Ferdinand watching helplessly from the quay as Marianne is carried away from him in the boat.

Yet these images of separation are only isolated examples in the film. One senses that Godard was striving for an overall 'abstract' effect, with these examples as only one aspect of this. Here the problem of what he really means by his Faure reference becomes critical. If it was to show the lives of Ferdinand and Marianne primarily through the 'space, sounds, colours' which surround them (which is José Luis Guarner's interpretation) then I would consider that he is successful in so far as, in *Pierrot*, we are always strongly aware of the environment. But this is equally true of *Alphaville* where environmental factors exert a far greater influence on the characters than they do in *Pierrot*. Ferdinand and Marianne are much less 'definable' in terms of their surroundings than the inhabitants of Alphaville. Even considering the dominance of form and imagery in *Pierrot*, I would have to conclude that Godard's attempt to describe the lives of Ferdinand and Marianne in terms of 'what exists between them' is only partly successful. However I am very thankful that it is only partly successful. I find the characterisations of the couple—their movements, gestures, dialogue: in short, everything that expresses their personalities—form the very nucleus of the film. For these to have been suppressed in favour of external factors, or purely formal considerations, would have been disastrous: witness *Made in USA*.

For above all *Pierrot* is a spontaneous film,

made very close to the pulse of life. Ferdinand and Marianne really try to 'live their lives'; doing as they choose, and consistently refusing to be bound by the laws and morality of the civilisation from which they are fleeing. Godard actively assists this movement towards 'total freedom' by providing them with cars, clothes, money, food, animals, books, etc., more or less as and when they want them. And he frees them totally from the threat of the law: any worries they may have had about the police catching them up are soon forgotten. In similar situations (being wanted for murder) the '*derniers couples*' of *You Only Live Once*, *They Live By Night* and *Bonnie and Clyde* are constantly overshadowed by the threat of 'legal' assassination, but we scarcely feel this to be the case with Ferdinand and Marianne.

Lest this be thought of as cheating by Godard, I must stress that there are threatening overtones to *Pierrot*, the implications of which are far more serious than any threat of the law: the overtones of war. Only one sequence of the film is free from these: the period spent at their cabin by the sea. At the beginning of the film, Samuel Fuller warns us when he tells Ferdinand 'The film is like a battleground . . .'. And so it proves. The rival gangs in the film are gunrunners, specifically related to war: Marianne mentions their activities in connection with the war in Yemen. A newsreel shows us the war in Vietnam. Laszlo Szabo tells us he is Laszlo Kovacs (Michel's alias in *A Bout de Souffle*) who had to flee San Domingo when the U.S. invaded. Later Marianne reads a paper with the headline '*Vision d'Horreur à St-Domingue*'. The only time we actually *see* Ferdinand and Marianne earn (!) money is when they do a sketch brutally caricaturing the U.S. aggression in Vietnam and some U.S. sailors pay them for it.

In fact the overtones of war seem to haunt Ferdinand and Marianne from the beginning. When he departs with cake-spattering adieux from the party, we can be sure that the fireworks which greet this action signal victory; but no sooner has he picked Marianne up to take her home than the same night sky is filled with the explosions of distant battle. And only minutes later the news over the car radio of the 115 Vietnamese dead breaks their silence and they are saying the words that initiate their affair. . . The violence in the film is constantly related to conditions of war: the dwarf talking of tortures

Still: Anna Karina as Marianne.

Still: the port at Toulon—Marianne (Anna Karina) and Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo).

à la Vietnam; the heavies working Ferdinand over as the Arabs did Bruno in *Le Petit Soldat*; the heavies disposed of in a scene of jungle warfare, with Marianne as a guerrilla-sniper. A bloody car accident is viewed with no more horror than it were a commonplace casualty on a battle-field, observed by men whose feelings have been numbed by war. (In *Weekend* these 'overtones of war' finally invade France, and Godard crystallises his vision of self-destructive humanity in such accidents and the total lack of concern which anyone displays for them.) Godard finally makes the linkage between national wars and the internal violence/conflicts of the film plain via the brief exchange between Ferdinand and Marianne as they leap into a car: 'What's happened to the police? We should be in jail.' 'They leave people to destroy themselves', and, in the background, across the whole screen, is a naval destroyer. And, to complement Samuel Fuller's artistic summing-up, we hear the other 'real-life' character in the film, the Lebanese Princess, telling us how she dare not go back to her country for fear of assassination. Godard's message is clear: it is not just the film that is 'like a battle-ground', it is life itself. Isolated in their secret place by the sea, away from the world, Ferdinand and Marianne can escape the violence and destruction of 'civilisation'. Godard really believed in this: in these sequences he has captured an idyllic happiness which one would have thought impossible in his world. But, outside this haven, the rest of the world is moving towards self-destruction. Marianne, seeing only the excitement of the moment, is drawn back into this world. Ferdinand, bound to her by love, can only follow. From that moment they are doomed . . .

MASCULIN–FEMININ

Stig Björkman

Paul (Jean-Pierre Léaud) meets Madeleine (Chantal Goya) who is an aspiring pop-singer. The film follows their lives as Paul changes jobs from commerce to journalism and then to market research, and Madeleine begins to become successful as a singer. Paul moves in with her and her flat-mates Elisabeth (Marlene Jobert) and Catherine (Catherine-Isabelle Duport), who in different ways try to come between them. Madeleine becomes pregnant. They are examining a new flat in a tall block when Paul falls to his death. Madeleine tells the police that it was an accident.

'Never two
glances together
no trace
of life, calm
empty
heat.
The light falls
nowhere
on the décor of this story.
Without holding back
the tale is told of the monotony
and of the work
for this ordinary
anonymous youth from Marseilles
who for 24 hours a day is speaking
about a life together, and
the impossibility of being alone.
Nowhere a trace.'

This is what Paul (Jean-Pierre Léaud) is writing in his note-book in the first shot of *Masculin, Féminin*. He is sitting at a table in a café. Then the film cuts to Madeleine (Chantal Goya) who has just entered the café and is caught in the centre of the picture. Paul addresses her. He is at the very edge of the frame. We, the viewers, can only guess at his presence from the outline of his profile at the right.

What is Godard getting at? Does his new photographer (Willy Kurant) have difficulty in positioning the camera and getting the actor into focus? Hardly. Godard's composition is wholly international. *Masculin, Féminin* works on two levels. One is an ambitious social *reportage*, the other a study of individuals—a handful of French teenagers in the winter of 1965. The two levels cannot merge. Godard invites us to look 'outside the picture'. Madeleine and Paul are very much aware of the world around them, and Godard uses his narrative technique to clarify in visual terms the situation of his characters—and our own. The director presents 'fifteen precise events' and these acutely observed fragments of a way of life must be seen in relation to a reality existing around the actors.

Godard introduces us to the new generation, 'children of Marx and Coca-Cola'. They are interviewed and interview each other, and their confessions are seen against the background of a world of violence and a confusion of thought and feeling. Godard's wintry ode of 1965 reveals a wounded world, Paris of the welfare race and the Vietnam demonstrations. Paris before the war. Threats and senseless acts of violence accompany the reports of the adolescent activists and consumers and their dialogues. Paul, Madeleine and their friends

witness domestic dramas ending in violent death; a suicide takes place before them. A man who borrows matches off Paul is said to sit down on a street corner, pour petrol over his clothing and set himself alight.

The reactions of Paul and the others are not in tune with these violent scenes. The woman who shoots her husband right in the middle of the street after a quarrel in a cafe is asked by Paul to close the door and shut out the cold. The man who sacrifices himself for 'peace in Vietnam' is reminded that he has forgotten to return the box of matches. Paul's reactions reveal an indifference which seems to indicate a lack of feeling and involvement. But Godard's attitude is in no way ambivalent. *Masculin, Féminin* radiates a despair quite as forceful as that of *Pierrot le Fou*. There the playfulness and the bright, easy-going love tried to cover up the pain and desperation. Paul's attitude is a protective mask, a safety device to prevent the dynamite from exploding.

Masculin, Féminin painfully indicates the rift between feeling and expression, between word and deed. Seven years ago Godard made Bruno Forestier, the leading character in *Le Petit Soldat*, say: 'In the 'thirties the young people had the revolution. Malraux, say, and Drieu la Rochelle and Aragon. There is nothing left for us. They had the Spanish Civil War, we have no war at all.' Bruno plays at taking part in the Algerian war in the same way that Paul and his friends carry their cold war far beyond Vietnam and other areas of conflict. The time for conquest is past for these knights in dressy suits. They arrive at their experiences 'intravenously'. They are viewers, observers, readers. They can sign petitions: 'Say, last week it was Madrid. What do you think it will be next week?' They can paint 'U.S. go home' on embassy cars.

Paul is a revolutionary without a mission, an activist without a programme. He is looking for truths, emotions, decisions, based on real values, but somewhere along the way he is being cheated in spite of his good will and his sensitive conscience. He is handicapped even in his relationship with Madeleine. She lives her life without questioning it. Whereas Paul is the romantic hero seeking tenderness and love, Madeleine is a rationalist—or maybe merely self-centred. They cannot get through to each other. 'I speak to you with feelings and you answer me with nothing but words,' Marianne said to Ferdinand/Pierrot in *Pierrot le Fou*. In *Masculin, Féminin* Paul cuts a record on which he appeals to Madeleine, but the words never reach her. Madeleine records a song which is all about love, but the words are not addressed to Paul who is on the other side of the glass panel in the recording studio trying in vain to attract her attention. While Paul is speaking to Madeleine with words full of emotion, Madeleine is talking to Paul in emotive words which do not express anything.

'Never two
glances together
no trace
of life, calm
empty
heat.'

As in so many of his films, Godard is preoccupied with deceit and deceitfulness. (Patricia in *A Bout de Souffle*; the *Femme Mariée*; Marianne in *Pierrot le Fou*; Paul Javal in *Le Mépris*; Nana who is deceived in *Vivre sa Vie*; or in *Le Grand Escroc* Patricia Leacock who both cheats and is cheated by films).

'All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts . . .'

Stills: Paul (Jean-Pierre Léaud), Madeleine (Chantal Goya), Elisabeth (Marlène Jobert): bottom, Catherine (Catherine-Isabelle Duport).

The final words in *Le Grand Escroc* outline a general dilemma which appears insoluble to Godard. We can never avoid a certain measure of deception, however hard we try to be honest and straightforward. The relationship between the person and the part he plays also becomes contradictory in *Masculin, Féminin* where the teenagers are trying to assume adult attitudes while retaining the irresponsibility which is their adolescent privilege.

In the final analysis the need is established for responsibility and awareness. We recognise Godard's existentialist philosophy from *Vivre sa Vie* where Nana interprets the ideas of the director. 'I lift my hand, I am responsible. I turn my head to the right, I am responsible. I forget that I am responsible, but nevertheless I am . . .' Paul, like Nana, accepts his responsibility. But Paul, like Godard—and the audience—can find no excuses for 'Mademoiselle 19 ans' who reveals in an interview her total lack of knowledge and awareness.

What is *Masculin, Féminin*? Godard gives an ironical answer.

ROBERT: Have you noticed that you can get the words *masque* and *cul* from *masculin*?

PAUL: And from *féminin*?

ROBERT: Nothing.

The many interviews and the seemingly improvised conversations give *Masculin, Féminin* an air of objectivity and generality. But to Godard objectivity is no virtue. In *Le Grand Escroc* Godard speaks with some conviction of the cinema as '*la plus belle escroquerie du monde*'. In this film Godard describes the truth-finding efforts of Patricia Leacock and other documentary film-makers as pretty pathetic. She gleaned various impressions but could hardly claim to have revealed the truth about the false Robin Hood of Marrakesh. In the words of the interviewed traitor: 'You steal life from me to give it to others.'

But Godard's way of giving life to the characters and their emotions is not deceitful. Like *Le Mépris, Masculin, Féminin* is a film completely in long-shot. Godard refuses to give clues to his characters through suggestive close-ups. His film is written in the present tense, and this is underlined by the long-shots.

Godard is devoted to a king of cinematic freestyle. He called *Pierrot le Fou* an 'attempt at expression through film.' *Masculin, Féminin* is just as experimental, and in *Made in U.S.A.* the world is in an even more advanced state of dissolution and chaos. 'Truth' and 'purity' are no longer absolute in Godard's aesthetic. He allows himself some irrationality. He irritates and in so doing he breaks down the prejudices of the cinema audience. He finds expressions for the rootlessness and lack of contact that he wants to describe. Godard has adopted and developed further the cinematic style that Rossellini reintroduced in the 'fifties.

Truffaut has talked about this: '*Jean-Luc n'aime pas discuter. Il donne tout de suite un jugement qui est quelquefois très profond, mais on ne s'en aperçoit que plus tard. On croit d'abord à une pirouette. Il n'a jamais aimé entrer dans les détails, jamais; cela c'est le grand point commun avec Rossellini.*'

Freedom is the key word. In *Pierrot le Fou* Godard, in a kind of frenzied rage, created his great action-painting about the chaos of life in the menacing shadow of death. In *Masculin, Féminin* the fight to demonstrate a kind of freedom is felt to be just as essential if not as desperate. The social and political complications are more discernible and give a greater weight to the situations. Godard has rarely taken sides so openly. The perspectives are clear and wide. The shots open up towards the viewer. They are simple, factual, sometimes fuzzy by their immediacy, but behind the raw surface of the *reportage*, feelings and atmospheres of great purity are evoked.

MASCULIN-FEMININ

Jim Hillier

Can one write a coherent criticism of a Godard film? Or—if the criticism is coherent—can it do justice to the film? A critic is likely to find himself writing about chunks or sequences of a Godard film—sequences which are admirable, sequences whose point he sees, sequences which are just baffling. Often the problem is to decide how, or if, these sequences form an integral part of and inform the whole. But this raises yet another problem: should we regard a Godard film as a whole, internally coherent, each part integral to the other? There is a lot to be said for regarding each film as a further chapter or episode of one film. Certainly, it is almost impossible to watch a Godard film, knowing others, and not be struck by recurring motifs or by sequences which seem to illuminate other *films* as much as they illuminate sequences in the same film. There is also some case for treating Godard's films not as coherent entities but as series of episodes which may or may not be linked. Godard seems to invite this approach, to a certain extent, by breaking his films into '*tableaux*' (*Vivre sa Vie*), '*chapitres*' (*Pierrot le Fou*) or '*faites précis*' (*Masculin-Féminin*). And frequently even those films not broken up quite so systematically are broken up in realisation. This breaking-up process has contributed to Godard's progressive discarding of the narrative form. He thereby gains a dangerous freedom, and also discards the need for characters and character development in the conventional sense. Thus, Godard's actors can do and say things which are not 'in character'. Lemmy in *Alphaville*, consciously conceived like Mike Hammer in *Kiss Me Deadly*, can quote Eluard and, in *Les Carabiniers*, Michel-Ange can salute Rembrandt.

But why discard the narrative form and character development? It does give Godard freedom for more personal expression, but this freedom is probably only a by-product. *Masculin-Féminin* is especially interesting because it seems to give some hints as to why Godard has discarded plot and character. In the film, Paul (or Godard) comments upon the social surveys which Paul carries out for his living. In monologue, Paul says that 'The questions deceived the interviewees, and the answers deceived the interviewers, perhaps'. The questions, he says, deformed the public opinion they were supposed to express, by partiality on his side. Without knowing it, he continues, he was deceiving himself and 'encouraging value judgements which were taking the place of real behaviour'. Paul concludes: '*La sagesse serait de voir la vie, vraiment voir*'. This sequence ends with two written quotes: 'The philosopher pits his conscience against public opinion' and 'The philosopher and the film-maker have in common a certain view of the world, that of a generation'. Godard seems to take the view that 'public opinion' deforms reality. The problem is how to be wise and to see, really see. Godard goes into the question of social surveys and public opinion at such length that it is permissible to establish a parallel for Godard's view of film-making. If we replace social survey questions by preformulated plots, and real opinions and attitudes by character and truth, we might arrive at the conclusion that Godard dislikes formulated plot

because it deforms the truth by presupposing attitudes, behaviour, reactions to events.

One is reminded of the Métro sequence in *Bande à Part* with the man clutching the parcel, when Arthur deeply confuses the spectator's responses by suggesting two very different views of the man, depending on the spectator's presuppositions. Godard seems to feel that a clear narrative construction, which might involve placing fictional characters in a predetermined and clearly-defined psychology, is like market research, which attempts to pin down attitudes, opinions, views of life, but which in fact, like a plot, only disfigures the truth. It is important to say that Godard feels this for himself (perhaps because he has no clear idea of a view of life to impose) and not necessarily for other directors. It would seem, however, that the directors whom Godard admires, like Renoir and Hawks, are much less plot-conscious than those he does not admire. Hawks, for example, has progressively become less interested in plot and more interested in how people behave and react in situations. In *Masculin-Féminin*, as in most of his films, Godard is investigating. He makes no attempt to propagate a total view of life, a total philosophy or a total truth. Rather, he attempts to capture life in a different way, to get at little bits of the truth. What matters in Godard are the flashes of insight into behaviour, into what makes people the way they are, what is wrong or shallow about them (like Mademoiselle 19 Ans, though our view of her might be modified by Paul's later monologue on the partiality of interviewers), what keeps people apart.

There are many ways in which such 'truths' might be captured. Godard once liked a section in some film because extras or technicians got in the way of a fast-moving sequence—he admired the touch of reality it gave. In *Pierrot le Fou* there are moments when Karina must simply be talking to Godard about their personal relationship, and these moments, mostly unconnected plot-wise, do carry a sometimes embarrassing charge of truth. Godard also allows for accident and improvisation, of which there appears to be much in *Masculin*: in the conversations of Paul and Madeleine in the washroom and Robert and Catherine in the flat kitchen, nothing much happens, but this is 'what it's like'. He can use such sequences not for plot advancement and so on, but simply for observation of behaviour. Essentially, too, Godard will not assign his players specific functions in a plot, though he may use them to ask his own questions. What he has done is to break down, or confuse, fiction and reality. Clearly, lots of *Masculin* is improvised and reveals real insights, yet the situations are set up and therefore unreal. Godard frequently seems to draw truth out of fiction. Though all artists should be doing this they don't do it in quite Godard's way. He is probably the only film-maker who is something of an equivalent to graphic artists like Rauschenberg, Paolozzi, Lichtenstein, who are experimenting with mass culture (to which Godard shares with them a distinctly ambiguous relationship), personal collage, reminiscence and reference. He also shares with them the problems of freedom and the personal nature of the vision. This is only possible because Godard's low-budget way of working has, if not cut him off from the commercial system, at least given him a privileged place within it. He does not have to worry about a lack of traditional structure not finding a mass audience. This does not mean that traditional cinema is bad, simply that Godard is different.

Masculin is a very grim film. Most of Godard purveys a grim, desperate view of life—one laughs less and less the more one sees each film. Godard's black and white films might be described as grey in texture, while his colour films have a feeling of despair and use extreme colours. *Masculin* might be described as dark

grey. It gives us a world of violence, degradation, perversion, indifference—the girl who shoots her husband and later, when a whore, abuses the German tourist, the man who stabs himself in the bowling alley, the negroes and white girl in the Métro, the Vietnam protester who sets fire to himself. When Madeleine, at the beginning of the movie, asks Paul what the army was like, he describes it, quietly, as moneyless, loveless, lacking in privacy, abandoned to authority, '*enfin, la vie moderne*'. In the lunch scene, we see Bardot reading to Bourseiller; she reads about the desolation left by war while Godard shows us visuals of a building site, streets, a station, people. These are grim views which are endorsed by the feeling of the whole film. Most scenes seem to cry out for more light, but we never get it. The final images are dark, the emotions confused and Paul has died, probably by suicide, off screen and desperate, like the Vietnam protester. As Robin Wood says, by refusing

Still: in the kitchen of the girls' flat, Robert (Michel Debord) questions Catherine (Catherine-Isabelle Duport) about her life.

society the Godard hero moves towards inevitable self-destruction. 'The tragic nature of Godard's work arises from his simultaneous sympathy with this rejection and a vigorously honest and unafraid confrontation of its consequences.'

Thus, much of Godard involves desired or actual escape which if desired cannot be realised and if realised must be doomed. *Masculin* seems to exclude the very possibility of escape. Escape, or flight, in Godard is usually South, to light, sun, and it is light which is lacking in *Masculin*. Michel Poiccard plans to escape south with Patricia, to Milan, Genoa, Rome. Bruno and Veronica hope to reach South America. Neither pair make it. Franz and Odile get to the South Seas and the film ends with news of a southern idyll. Since Godard takes up this 'idyll' in *Pierrot*, we can see how hopeless he finds the ideal of escape. For those Godard heroes who do escape, the flight is futile. Godard has tended to film the process of escape in a very stylised way. *Bande à Part* seems to have introduced the idea of motorway lights flashing over a car windscreen, and this motif is taken up in the escapes both of Ferdinand and Marianne and Lemmy and Natasha. In *Pierrot*, Marianne tells a story which is almost archetypal for Godard, of a man who escapes south only to find death waiting for him in a road accident. In *Bande à Part* the flight is an extension of the characters' need to behave as in pulp fiction and cinema; it is treated ironically and quite unrealistically and is as doomed as the escape of Ferdinand and Marianne.

Made in USA seems to have been anticipated

Still: Paul (Jean-Pierre Léaud) and his friend Robert (Michel Debord).

by *Masculin* in its portrait of an incoherent world of gratuitous violence, though Atlantic-Cité is essentially unreal and nightmarish, while the actual presence of Paris is strongly felt in *Masculin*. It has been said that it is marvellous just to sit and watch the colours of *Made in USA*, yet the colours seem to be intended as suffocating, airless, 'closed'. As in *Masculin*, the images seem to cry out for light. And in *Made in USA* they do get light. On the motorway out—and motorways in general are another Godard motif—the traffic lights change from red to green and the film opens out. The final sequence is all light blues and greens—airy, natural colours. In this atmosphere Paula has her first 'normal' contact, with the first character with a 'normal' name, and the first spontaneous offer of help. The rest of *Made in USA* is one side, fiction and dream, and *Masculin* the other side, reality, of the same thing.

The behaviour of the characters in *Bande à Part*—modelled on pulp fiction in novel and cinema—raises another constant motif in Godard's work. But it is not only pulp fiction on which characters model themselves, and not only 'pulp' heroes are inadequate. Godard's heroes don't fare better when they seek identification with more serious heroes, like Bruno Forestier's writers of the 'thirties. Rather, any identifications mean that the hero is living at least partly vicariously and not as Paul in *Masculin* says one should live, '*voir avec ses propres yeux, penser avec sa propre tête*'. Thus, Michel Poiccard has Bogey, and maybe Patricia has Romeo and Juliet. Bruno has the 'thirties writers and Thomas l'Imposteur. Arthur and Franz have Billy the Kid and dime novels. (One might even say that Nana has Falconetti, for what I see in that sequence, when she cries with Joan of Arc, is the passive acceptance which marks her progressive degradation.) The characters in *La Chinoise* have theoretical Marxism. Ferdinand has a host of literary touchstones and, driving away from Paris, Marianne tells him she wishes life was like a novel. The two of them share Laurel and Hardy, Les Pieds Nickelés, Laszlo Kovacs, Michel Simon, musicals. All the identifications limit the characters and perhaps prove fatal, since they provide a vicarious existence which avoids the real. Godard understands and sympathises with the process whereby we all need to identify in this way but does not shrink from also showing its limiting effect. In *Masculin*, the girls have their day-dream indulgences, perhaps most clearly in the naïve sentiments of Madeleine's songs. Paul is less indulgent but the cinema sequence in *Masculin* provides one of the most moving insights into both our *need* of these indulgences and their failure to help. Paul's voice tells us: 'As the screen lit up, we would shiver, but we were mostly disappointed. It was not the film of our dreams, nor the film we had inside us. It was not the film we would have made or—more secretly—have lived.'

The gulf between dream and reality is at the bottom of Paul's problem in *Masculin*, the reason for his despair. Like all Godard heroes, Paul is an outsider. He is never at one with the girls, nor even with Robert, though there is of course no implication that any of them have solutions, since Paul's problems disprove them. Paul is effectively cut off, even in small things. No one understands his Carette imitation of '*Moi, je n'ai pas de vieille mère !*' or his liking for Mozart's clarinet concerto, or his reading of Renoir's note to the projectionist. And just as no one understands him, nor can he understand the others; he can't become someone else. In one sequence, while Paul and Robert are in a café, a man comes in asking for the Vélodrome. He is told it is on the other side of Paris (and there is something very disturbing there—to be *so* off-centre). Paul walks out, re-enters, asks

the same question and gets the same answer. Robert asks what he's doing. Paul replies 'Nothing . . . Putting yourself in the other guy's place doesn't help'. He tries but fails to make personal contacts. In his conversation with Madeleine in the washroom, his cheeks and mouth vibrate nervously and he has a haunted, hunted look (taken up, perhaps, in his guilt story told to Robert in the launderette with nervous jump cuts), a look he never really loses. Like Ferdinand in *Pierrot* and the Jean-Marc Bory character in *Le Nouveau Monde*, Paul tries to grope his way out of solitude and incoherence by writing down his preoccupations. This is what he is doing in the first shot of the film and this is the shot we return to, in an inevitable circular movement, before his death. He writes '*Jamais deux regards ensemble . . . Pas de trace . . . de vie, silence*'.

'*Tendresse*' is a key word in Godard films. It is for example one of the words that Natasha liked very much and has disappeared from Alphaville. In *Masculin* it is Paul's favourite word. He does not find it and dies, having told Madeleine 'one can't live without tenderness, one might as well shoot oneself'. '*Tendresse*' is a key word for Godard because it involves the human contact that his characters don't find. He has always sought to explore the separateness of human beings. Already in *A Bout de Souffle*, Patricia remarks '*On dit dormir ensemble, mais c'est pas vrai*', and when Michel knows he is betrayed he says 'we always talked about ourselves'. In *Bande à Part* the Madison reveals the three seemingly dancing happily *together*, until we learn their thoughts, which are all essentially *separate*. And the loneliness of people is the theme of Odile's song on the Métro. At the end of *Bande à Part* Franz tells Odile that '*les gens ne fassent pas un tout*', they stay separate, '*méfiants et tragiques*'.

Still: Paul and Robert (Michel Debord).

Godard in *Masculin* emphasises separateness by his *mise-en-scène*. In the first café scene, only a fragment of Paul's face is in frame as he talks to Madeleine. A great spatial gulf divides them, just as a great spiritual gulf divides them in the whole film. In their conversation in the washroom, the *découpage* keeps them apart, since, although in a confined space, they never appear in the same shot. This happens, too, throughout most of the kitchen conversation between Robert and Catherine, a conversation ironically underlined by the counterpointing of Catherine's repeated '*Cela ne vous regarde pas*' and Madeleine's disc '*Sois gentil*' playing in the background. Very little contact is made in either conversation. Paul says the centre of his world is love, tenderness. Madeleine replies 'I would have said me'. One of the tragedies about the girls is that they not only know what they are but accept what they are—Elisabeth tells Paul they're no good for him. Even so, our attitude to Madeleine is complicated by the one almost tender scene in the film, with Paul in bed with the girls. The sequence ends with a close up of Madeleine and her quiet recital of '*Amour, amour . . . et au coeur de l'homme, la solitude*'. Although in one sequence it is Catherine who insists on contact

Still: Madeleine, Elisabeth and Paul.

by skin while Elisabeth stresses verbal contact, most of the contact of Elisabeth and Madeleine is essentially epidermic and it is Elisabeth who talks about a machine to satisfy our sexual desires.

Everyone, including Malraux in his political speech, seems to be talking to himself in *Masculin*. Paul's story about his father discovering the movements of earth and sun is not really listened to by the girls. Paul is the only one interested or amused. Personal contact is difficult. Godard seems to say that we're losing the habit. In the party scene at the start of *Pierrot le Fou* 'conversation' is exchanged, advertisements, reminiscent of Charlotte and Pierre introducing Leenhardt to the wonders of their apartment, in *Une Femme Mariée*. Declaring love is even harder than other personal contact, since it should be an exchange of the most personal emotions. Paul's problem is reinforced in the café scene when he tries to propose, since their perambulation round the café reveals different aspects of love—tenderness, pornography, the practical need of sexuality—in incidental bits of conversation in separate groups of people round the café. The difficulty of personal, verbal contact seems to be the reason why Godard characters tend to indulge in mono- rather than dia-logue. It is easier to tell a story, and Godard abounds in them, than to make personal contact through conversation, because it needs no personal interaction. And always in Godard, monologues, like Devos's in *Pierrot*, reinforce people's isolation. Explaining or declaring love is such a problem that Paul finally finds it easier, is even driven to, communicating with Madeleine when she is not there and in an advertisement-like way (he wants her tanned in a bikini, '*Aviation appelle Caravelle, Paul appelle Madeleine !*'). Paul's notebook is also a monologue and Madeleine only speaks of emotions when she records her love songs, as Paul does his love message, impersonally. When Paul is present while she records a love song, he is merely in the way. Ironically, too, while Paul is trying to propose and Madeleine is anxious to get to a recording session, her anxiety to leave is underlined by her love song starting on the café juke box. Madeleine is prone to monologue thoughts which almost completely exclude any human relationship, so centred in objects and self are they: 'My coat is solid blue, Elisabeth's has a white border. Paul kissed me for the second time. Maybe we'll screw together [subtitles translation], unless he becomes a drag. I hope my record is a success. I'll buy a Morris Cooper.' Elsewhere with Madeleine we see her inability to make choices, rather like the inserts of '*Prenez parti*' in *Une Femme Mariée*. '*L'un n'empêche pas l'autre*' is a phrase she uses several times and her final words are a repeated '*J'hésite*'. The only time two people speak in unison in the film is when Paul and Robert exclaim the O Yes! bra advertisement as a girl walks into the launderette.

The violence in *Masculin* seems even more gratuitous than that in *Pierrot* and is rather like that in *Made in USA*. It may be, as

Richard Roud complains, that Godard's 'jottings on contemporary violence' are not integrated into the films. The point about this violence, though, is that it *is* gratuitous, it is there and there seems no way of integrating it. One might ask: how do Acton householders seeing a man mown down in a suburban street one morning integrate it into their lives? In *Masculin*, violence is, as Philip French says, 'constantly recounted and encountered', but it is never faced or experienced. There is no way of coping with it. It is as remote as Vietnam.

Violence links with politics. Godard's heroes are essentially apolitical in the party sense. Godard's definitive statement on politics before *Masculin* was Ferdinand's story on the beach in *Pierrot*: the man in the moon meets the Russian spaceman who stuffs him with Marx, then runs to the American who gives him a Coca-Cola while making him say 'thank you' first (and this is where the 'children of Marx and Coca-Cola' idea comes from). So the man in the moon runs away and is down on the beach with Marianne. Party politics no longer make sense. Right and left are the same thing, and Godard's heroes flee from them. Yet Ferdinand, and Paul in *Masculin*, remains a feeling human and therefore 'political man'. Bruno in *Le Petit Soldat* is involved without knowing why, except perhaps that he needs *some* cause. This need for a cause recurs in both *Masculin* and *La Chinoise*. Paul signs petitions but is bewildered by the reasons why he has to sign them. He daubs military cars, but the reality remains remote. His motives are political only in the widest sense, like Ferdinand's.

The heroes feel and wish to act, but find no apt framework for action. Robert tells Paul that he will never find a personal solution, that one must learn by fighting, i.e., in the Communist Party. Paul admires him, but can't do the same. *La Chinoise* takes this further. In it, Marxism belongs in one house; outside is different. Inside, they can theorise about violence as the only means, but Véronique makes a mess of her assassination attempt and finds violence quite different in human terms. Amongst themselves, they always have the right answers because they always ask the right questions. Outside, in the train with Jeanson, the girl doesn't know how to answer because the questions are wrong.

Paul, in *Masculin*, is vociferous about Vietnam. Yet he is quite unable to appreciate or cope with the individual acts of violence around him. He is bewildered by their proximity, but to a certain extent he is also inured to them. It is this sort of 'schizophrenia' which provides much of the paradox of the film, and perhaps explains the 'children of Marx and Coca-Cola' caption, since both views of life have things to offer, but neither offers a solution. A major current in Godard's thought which ties up here is that of the gulf between the emotion and the act, and between action and reflection. In *Pierrot*, given money, Marianne would choose action (Chicago, Las Vegas, Monte Carlo), and Ferdinand reflection (Florence, Athens). In *La Chinoise*, one of the main themes is the unbridgeable gulf between the idea and the action. In *Masculin* Paul feels, wishes to act. But not only does he find no way of acting, he also feels quite alien to the man who does find a way (self-immolation), probably because it also is so futile. Indeed, soon after this 'demonstration', Paul chooses death. It would seem to be the inability of Godard's heroes either to change themselves or society which leads to death. Flight is shown to be no answer, since neither the individual nor society is changed by it. The failure explains death and is a measure not only of the inadequacy of the individual—and of Godard himself—but also of the failure of society.

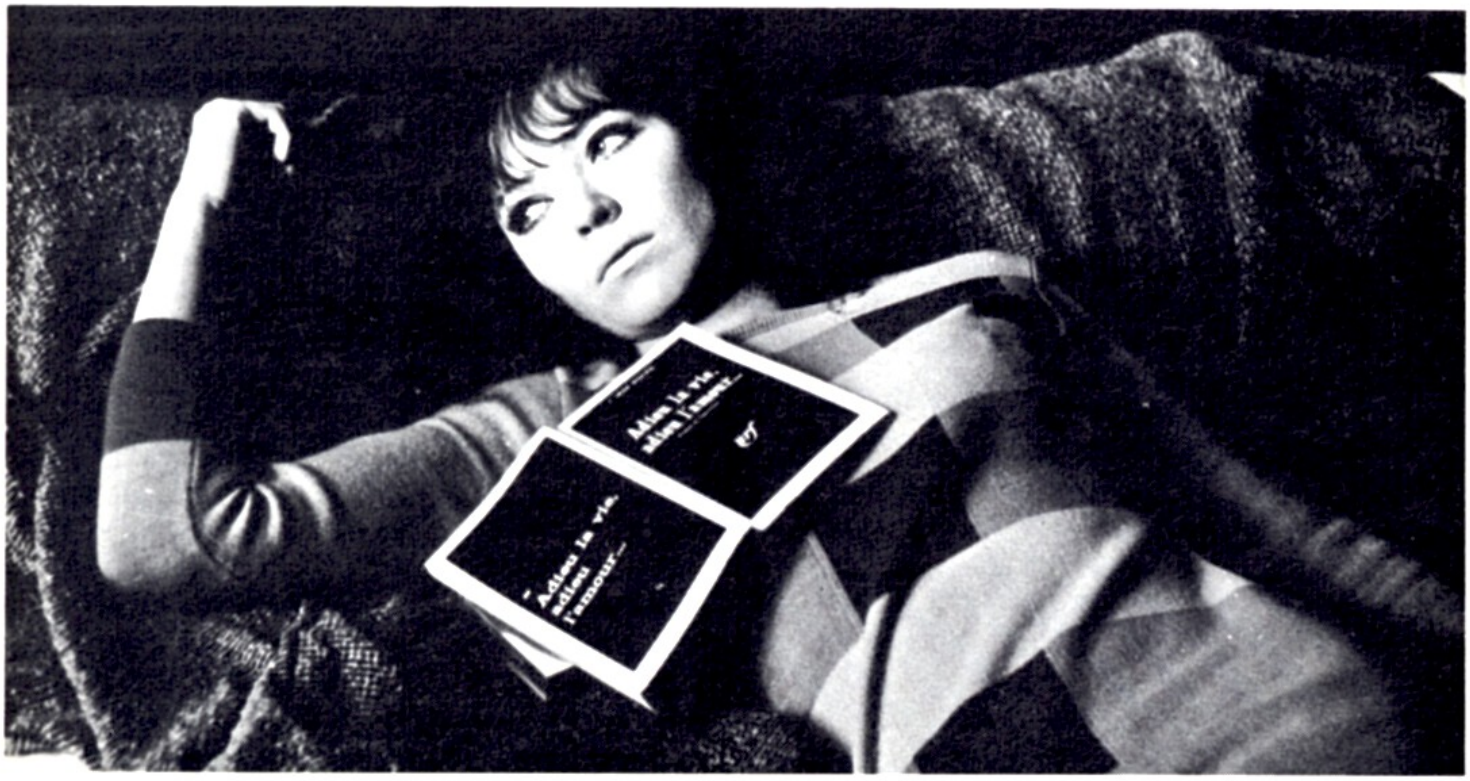
MADE IN USA

Ian Cameron

Paula Nelson (Anna Karina) goes to Atlantic City to investigate the death of her ex-lover, Richard. She is pestered with offers of cooperation by Edgar Typhus (Ernest Menzer), who has brought with him his nephew David Goodis (Yves Afonso) and David's fiancée, Doris Mizoguchi (Kyoko Kosaka). She comes up against Paul Widmark (Laszlo Szabo) and his assistant Donald Siegel (Jean-Pierre Léaud). Typhus and Doris are found dead and Paula is arrested for their murder. She is released in custody of Widmark, a regional official. Siegel, who has been sacked by Widmark, reveals to Paula that he was the murderer and tries to sell her his services. She shoots him. With Widmark, whose assassins killed Richard, she goes to the villa where Richard used to hold clandestine political meetings. Also present, unknown to Widmark, is David. When Widmark is about to kill her, David shoots him. To prevent the truth getting out, Paula shoots David.

Made in U.S.A. presents a series of corollaries to *Pierrot le Fou*, which was the summation of one side of Godard's film-making in the

Still: 'le bonheur, par exemple . . .'—*Paula (Anna Karina) in the first shot of the film.*



same way as *Deux ou trois choses* turned out to be of another. It is his slightest film since *Alphaville*, perhaps even since *Bande à Part*. Conversely (a word that seems to turn up very often in articles on Godard), it is also one of his most difficult.

There is an interview in which Godard states that he made the film after seeing *The Big Sleep* and had the idea of having the Humphrey Bogart role played by a woman (' Anna Karina, as it happens '). As a result, the word got around that this was a remake of the Hawks movie—indeed the London Film Festival announced it as such. If it bears any resemblance to *The Big Sleep*, it is not in the story but in its handling. In an interview in Movie 5, Howard Hawks said: ' I never could figure the story out . . . They asked me who killed such and such a man—I didn't know . . . Then when the picture was getting ready to go to New York, the publicity man said, " Howard, what will I tell them about this picture ? " And I said, " Well, tell them it's kind of interesting because it's told from the point of view of the detective and there are no red herrings. And if anybody can follow the plot they have to follow what he is thinking." And I can't and he can't, so an audience might be amused. '

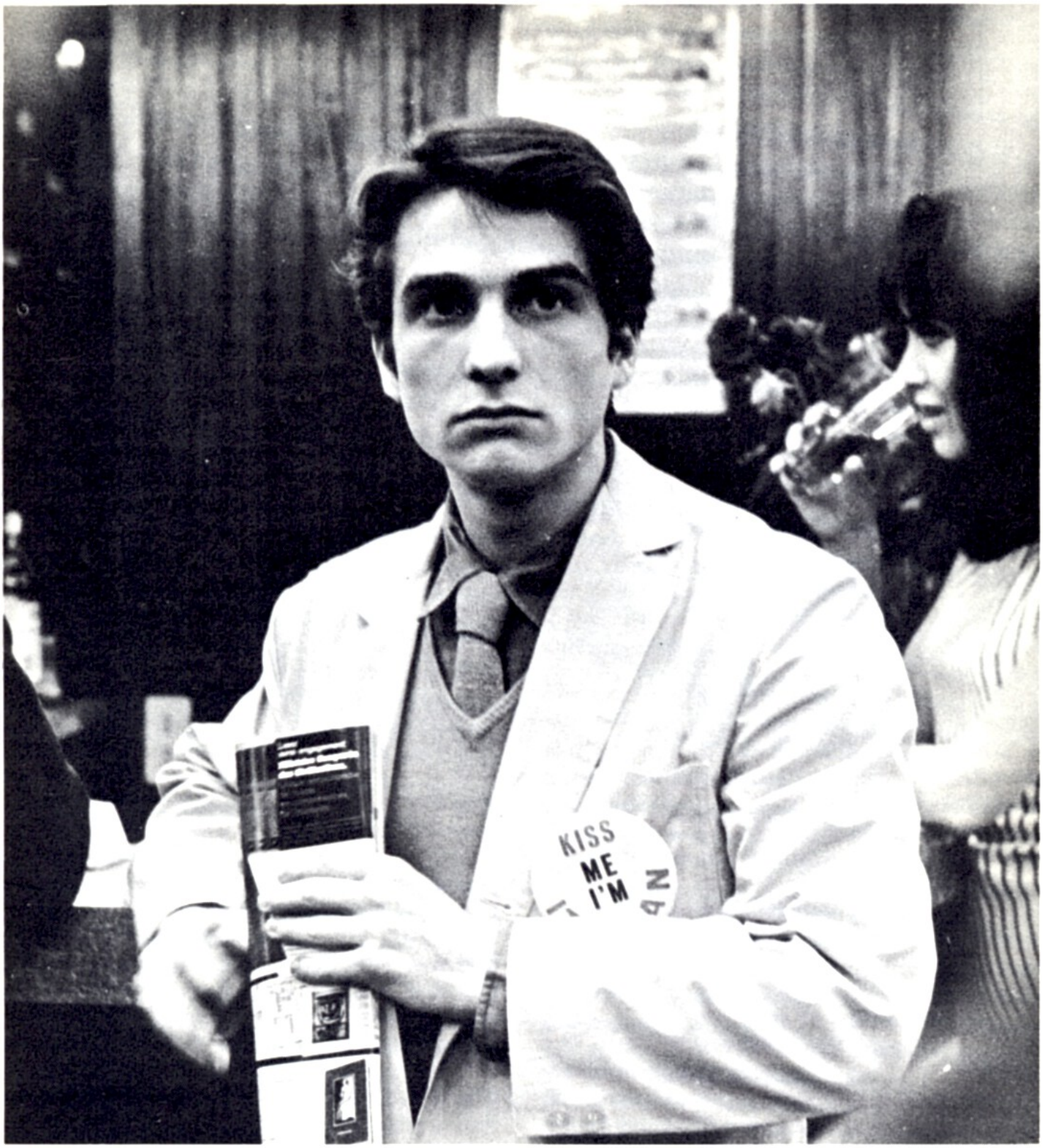
It is a film in which a simple narrative centred on a single character covers a story that is by no means simple or clear; and there the resemblance ends. The aspects of the Bogart persona represented by Paula Nelson are only at the level of Michel Poiccard's adulation in *A Bout de Souffle*—' Bogey! ' The Bogey syndrome is just as well represented at this level in the Lemmy Caution character in Alphaville. And Paula's slick felling of Typhus with a blue shoe ('*Quel genre de souliers vous préférez avec ma robe, les bleus ou les blancs ?* ') is very Lemmy. Like Lemmy, she arrives in a town in the future and produces a trail of violence before driving away, leaving the town without one of its leading citizens.

The difficulty about *Made in U.S.A.* for both critic and audience is that it is a film with little at its centre but with a very strong periphery. However, the unimportant centre is quite well defined and the important periphery is a matter of references and passing allusions.

It also pushes to an even further extreme than before many of the characteristics of Godard's style. The actors are, even by Godard's standards, very little concerned with their traditional business of creating characters. Perhaps it is the influence of Bresson on Godard that sometimes makes one feel that he could make a very adequate film with a cast composed entirely of newsreaders. The names of the parts—Inspector Aldrich, Paul Widmark, Doris Mizoguchi—emphasise that these are arbitrarily invented beings. The action is less convincing than ever: Godard is always finding new methods of reminding us that we are watching film and not reality. Paula and Widmark sometimes interrupt their conversations to turn towards the audience and retail each other's words to us in reported speech. At one point, to emphasise the unimportance of the plot, they are both talking at once, both giving us (in terms of the plot) valuable information.

The centre-less structure of the film reflects the illogicality which it has inherited from *Pierrot*. There illogical action was a method of escape from the bonds of convention, of achieving a new spontaneity. *Made in U.S.A.* qualifies the illogicality of *Pierrot*, for here the illogical spills over into the nonsensical. In the bar scene, a workman invents a long string of nonsensical phrases like ' *le barman est dans la poche de la veste du crayon.* ' But, of course,

Still: kiss him, he's Italian—Donald Siegel (Jean-Pierre Léaud) and Paula (Anna Karina).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I'M

the nonsense is not *just* nonsense. Out of it emerge flashes of sense, disturbing implications and fragmentary statements. After Paula has said that she is twenty-two, there follows a discussion about ages:

OUVRIER: . . . *j'ai que deux ans de plus d'elle.*

PAULA: *Ah bon, je ne savais pas que vous aviez* 19 *ans.*

BARMAN: *Mais voyons* 22 *et* 35 *ça fait pas* 19.

PAULA: *Si, sauf pendant la guerre.* 70+14, *ça faisait* 40.

The last remark might be as meaningless as its predecessors apparently are, but for the fact that 1870 was the year of the disastrous Franco-Prussian War. Consider also that apart from being the year the Germans invaded France, 1914 was also when the Socialist leader Jean-Jaurès was murdered (we see Paula in front of a Rue Jean-Jaurès street sign on her way to see Dr. Korvo). And in 1940 the French defences were pierced near Sedan. One could take this a lot further, but caution is necessary as the French view of European history is rather remarkable (vide Jean Aurel's film of *La Bataille de France.* which Godard accepts). One of the difficulties of the film for a non-French audience (or at least for an insular Briton like me) is that its references are to French political figures from Robespierre, Dumouriez and St Just to Lecanuet, Pinay and Pleven. It's no surprise that the film's Swedish distributors caught a terrible cold with it, for *Made in U.S.A.* is the least exportable of Godard's films.

More fragments of meaning emerge from the statements of the young writer, David Goodis (the real owner of the name was, of course, the author of the novel from which Truffaut adapted *Tirez sur le pianiste*, a film which anticipated Godard in dealing with the grotesque, even ludicrous aspects of violence). He tells Paula that during the 127 years he was in Paris, he saw his fiancée, Doris Mizoguchi, '*rarement. Elle habitait trop loin. Je la rencontrais seulement tous les jours. Le matin au petit déjeuner, le midi au déjeuner, l'après-midi au goûter, quelquefois entre le goûter et le diner, et puis au cinéma ou au théâtre après le diner. Elle ne pouvait pas venir plus souvent car elle habitait trop loin, à Levallois et moi à Paris. Puisque Levallois n'est pas à Paris et puisque Paris n'est pas la France elle devait demander un visa sur son passeport chaque fois qu'elle venait me voir à Paris.*' Which is a) evidently nonsense but invokes b) the eagerness of the man in love to be with his sweetheart constantly, c) commuting—Levallois is a suburb of Paris, d) the distinction between Paris and provincial France and e) official control of individual action and the growth of the police state, viewed here in a *reductio ad absurdum.* But perhaps it is less absurd than it might appear, for the film is set in the future, the control would not be so extraordinary in war-time and, as Edgar Typhus says in the opening scene of the film (recalling *Le Petit Soldat*), '*La guerre n'est jamais finie.*'

The use of the nonsense dialogue to contain fragments of meaning is paralleled by the handling of the tape-recorded political speeches; the parallel is germane to Godard's purposes in the film. The voice is Richard's dictating the preliminary version of a manifesto. Distorted by the tiny recorder, it is difficult to catch, and, like the plot points recited by Widmark and Paula, not important in its details. The grating voice has overtones of Alpha 60. The sentences are weary agglomerations of political jargon—not the first time that Godard has noted the incapacity of the Left to communicate its theories. And the repeated references to the French Revolution are perhaps indicative of an unhealthy nostalgia. From the tape recordings we learn the determination of the Communists to block

Still: in the film poster workshop: Widmark (Laszlo Szabo), Paula (Anna Karina) and killer.

an alliance between the Centre and the non-Communist Left.

As this film, which Godard has said is an attempt to tell a story, takes his rejection of narrative disciplines to the limit, the critic is left in the situation of not having a coherent structure to describe. One is also in the situation of writing about a film which one does not fully understand, a network of references and thematic points, many of which one has probably missed. The reflex action of a critic stuck in this position is to reach for a value judgment and cover lack of understanding with blanket adulation or invective.

At this point, it is worth digressing to note that Godard does not make movies for people; he makes them for Godard. In other words, his aim is to record and to express rather than to communicate to an audience. It is tempting to view Godard's films as if there were a little man behind them trying with various degrees of success to say something to his audience. This approach allows one the luxury of

ignoring as failures in communication all the references which one has missed. Although Godard makes specifically contemporary films, he does not make them primarily to be comprehensible to a contemporary audience. It is almost beyond argument that Godard is trying to express himself to his own satisfaction and that as far as he is concerned, it is up to the spectator to try to understand. If this is true, then whatever one may say about Godard's attitude to the cinema, all his references are important because all are expressive.

Therefore, pushing aside temptations to value judgment and admitting incomplete comprehension, I shall content myself with providing a few notes as hints for the spectator. To avoid any pretence that my comments add up to a connected argument, an illusion that any competent journalist can create, I shall end with a series of numbered, unconnected points.

1) The film's structure is that of the world it evokes: a thin crust of coherence stretched perilously thin over a turbulent substratum of intrigue and violence—a variation on the set-up of Fritz Lang's *Die Spinnen* or his Mabuse films, with the underworld now composed not of one but of many organisations. The one comfortably unbelievable organisation of evil has been replaced by many (this time based on fact) warring in the shadows for possession of the daylight world.

2) The film's premise could be those words in the little red book: ' Every Communist must grasp the truth, " Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. " ' The plot is composed of units of violence. Richard's words were trumped by a bullet from one of Widmark's assassins and Goodis's novel will remain unfinished because Paula has to kill him.

3) Art is truth and truth is subversive to the plans of politicians just as it is to those of businessmen (*Le Mépris*). Art versus power is a struggle that runs through Godard's films; in this art is an expression of freedom and conscience. The details of the '*ténébreuse affaire*' must not come out. Paula says, '*Si tu finis ton roman tout le monde la saura puisque poésie égale vérité.*' So Goodis has to die, sacrificed to political imperatives. There is a repeated shot of the word LIBERTE daubed on a wall being sprayed with machine-gun bullets.

4) There is little to choose between the operations of the extreme left and of the extreme right. Richard died from heart failure (which might or might not have been caused by a bullet in the brain) and Paula draws a parallel: '*même à Treblinka et à Auschwitz les gens eux aussi finissaient par mourir d'un arrêt du coeur.*' Note Godard's sensitivity to fashion in giving Treblinka billing over Auschwitz. Twenty years ago it would have been Belsen, then perhaps Buchenwald or Dachau would have had second billing, but after having a book devoted to it, Treblinka is out there in front . . .

5) There are abundant suggestions of linkages between government, police and political activities in the area, between agitation and downright terrorism. Looking at Widmark and Inspector Aldrich, Paula understands the meaning of the adjective '*parallèle*' applied to the police. Widmark, '*chargé de l'aménagement de la région* 5,' carries an identity card with a tricolour diagonal stripe which impresses policemen. He is using his government position for political purposes and maintains a gang of assassins, two of whom are called Richard Nixon and Robert MacNamara. His cars are an official-looking

Still: Widmark, ' chargé de l'aménagement de la région 5 ' *shows his identity card.*

Still: parallel operation—Inspector Aldrich removes Paula's handcuffs for Widmark.

Citroen lent to him by his deputies, and the Chrysler belonging to his killers.

6) Another theme of the film is the increasing Americanisation of French life: the French town where the film is set is called Atlantic-Cité. The Americanisation co-exists with the anti-Americanism which is mentioned in one of the political speeches; the linkage between these tendencies was surely the point of Godard's now famous description in *Masculin-Féminin* of the children of Marx and Coca-Cola. Violence and America are linked in the interchangeability in the film of the sounds of machine-guns and pinball machines. Paula kills Donald Siegel in a garage, *locus classicus* of Hollywood (or Chicago) gangster killings.

7) '*Gauche année zéro*' or the problems of the Left. Problems of the future of Communism now that the revolutionary struggle is over: '*Le paradis communiste,' says Dr. Korvo, 'ne peut plus être un paradis révolutionnaire comme il l'était il y a* 40 *ans.*' Problems of disunity and struggles for power. Problems of coming to terms with violence, the rejection of which by left-wing idealists amounts in the context of this film to an invitation to martyrdom. But was Richard the liberal idealist which his position with *L'Express* should indicate? Or had he been drawn into the violence and taken part in the killing?

8) The glimpsed outlines of the political struggles are further clouded by personal issues. Apparently Edgar Typhus and certainly Donald Siegel who may have killed him were motivated by greed. Left versus Right and Left versus Left as issues are complicated

not only by money but by revenge (Paula) and by feuds like the one between Typhus and Mark Dixon, who, according to Aldrich, killed him: '*règlement des comptes entre deux anciens de la guerre de Maroc.*'

9) Torture is a normal part of the political underworld's activities. Marie Dufour was tortured with a razor blade. Mme. Céline, the charwoman from *Une Femme Mariée*, turns up walking with a limp. We learn that she has been tortured and then given 100,000 francs to invent a story to explain her burns. '*Toujours le sang, la peur, la politique, l'argent . . .*'.

10) References to Kennedy, to Ben Barka, to the murder of the mayor of Evian and to the fates of the 17 witnesses to the Kennedy assassination as well as the fact that Paula wanted to write a book on Lee Harvey Oswald, underline the impression that assassination is the international reserve currency of politics. Richard wrote that '*le fascisme était le dollar de la morale.*'

11) Paula herself is an almost schizophrenic product of the film's twin dedication to Sam (Fuller) and Nick (Ray): left wing in convictions, but right-wing in patterns of action. Like the American private eye figure, she is a practical embodiment of the commonplace feeling that a little well-placed violence will sort things out. But, unlike Sam Spade or Mike Hammer, Paula solves very little; she just leaves behind a trail of corpses.

12) In many ways, particularly the use of colour and music, this is the most arbitrary of Godard's films. The colour departs from Godard's previously modest palette of red, blue and white to a wide range of strong and conspicuous colours. Paula appears quite arbitrarily against such backgrounds as an ochreous yellow wall or on a bridge painted bright blue.

13) The unreality of the proceedings gives political skullduggery the air of a game—Paula and Widmark even play hot and cold as she searches in the garage for Richard's tape recorder. Politics as war have been a concern of Godard since *Le Petit Soldat*. The illusion of war as a game was the subject of the Mayakovsky fable in *Les Carabiniers*. And the '*neveu d'oncle Sam contre la nièce d'oncle Ho*' sequence of *Pierrot le Fou* had evident implications of war as entertainment. The corpse in Dr. Korvo's surgery has a bandaged head completely flayed and with staring eyeballs, like some highspot in a horror movie. Many of the minor names—Dr. Korvo, Daisy Kenyon, Mark Dixon—are from old Otto Preminger films. Politics is viewed by Godard as being a bit like a bad movie. This aspect of *le fantastique du réel* turns up rather oddly in the commentary: '*Déjà la fiction l'emporte sur le réel. Déjà du sang et du mystère, déjà j'ai l'impression de naviguer dans un film de Walt Disney mais joué par Humphrey Bogart, donc dans un film politique.*

14) There are no answers in Godard movies, only questions:

WIDMARK: *C'est moi qui pose les questions.*
PAULA: *Bon, alors posez les réponses.*

And the screen shows a fragment of strip cartoon with the speech bubbles containing only question marks.

15) If the film has a political moral, it is that the struggle of Left and Right is no longer useful. Now it is the assumptions on which the struggle is based that should be challenged.

PHILIPPE: . . . La droite et la gauche c'est pareil, on ne les changera pas. La droite parce qu'elle est idiote à la force de méchanceté. La gauche parce qu'elle est sentimentale. D'ailleurs la droite et la gauche c'est une équation complètement perimée, il ne faut plus la poser comme ça.
PAULA: Alors comment?

DEUX OU TROIS CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D'ELLE Stig Björkman

Juliette (Marina Vlady) lives in a new apartment block in a Paris suburb. Her husband (Roger Montsoret) works in a garage. To pay the bills of her comfortable, middle-class life, she engages in prostitution.

In the summer of 1966 Godard was making two films simultaneously, *Made in USA* and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, and the two films have various things in common.

Both *Made in USA* and *Deux ou trois choses* were inspired by real events. The former drew on certain aspects of the Ben Barka affair to build up a nightmarish picture of a paralyzing political atmosphere, a plot full of real but invisible menace. *Deux ou trois choses* takes as its point of departure a feature in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in which the journalist Catharine Vimonet writes of *les étoiles filantes*, that is those housewives in the modern suburbs of Paris who pass the time and make some pin-money as part-time prostitutes. Some points raised by the article, and by some of the readers' letters following it, are the basis for Godard's film with its eighteen lessons about the modern industrial civilization.

Deux ou trois choses forms a *collage* of opinions and images. The film is as fragmented as *Made in USA* and there is the same verbal disintegration, but in style and content it belongs with Godard's sociologically most ambitious films, *Vivre sa Vie*, *Une Femme Mariée*, *Masculin-Féminin*. *Deux ou trois choses* takes the form of a series of confrontations with French everyday life and the people in it. People are caught unawares as they go about their daily tasks. They are interviewed and exchange confidences with the audience, either in shy testimony or open confession.

We are often thrown into Godard's films with brutal directness. The 'action' of the film has already begun before we are facing it, as in *Une Femme est une Femme*, or *Pierrot le Fou*, or *Made in USA* which opens with a shot of Anna Karina and the words: ' Happiness, for instance . . .'

Deux ou trois choses commences with four views of modern city life in Paris, whether bursting with the noises of modern construction work or enveloped in total silence as if the image of the city was being laid out for a post-mortem, followed by a shot of Marina Vlady at the window of her suburban flat. A whispering voice (Godard's) announces: 'She is Marina Vlady. She is an actress. She's wearing a sweater with yellow stripes. She is of Russian origin. She has got fair hair, or maybe light brown. I'm not quite sure.'

This is succeeded by a shot of the same window, same actress, but seen from another angle: 'She is Juliette Janson. She lives here. She is wearing a sweater with blue stripes. She's got fair hair, or maybe light brown. I'm not sure.'

There we have the image of the actress and the image of the part she is playing. Godard does not make a distinction, and later on in the film when Juliette is speaking she uses the words of Marina Vlady. Still, we must bear in mind the task of the actress to communicate a character which is not her own. She discusses the part, announces her sympathies

and the points on which her opinions diverge. Here we have Brecht's theories on the quoting actor.

But the *she* of the film is neither Marina nor Juliette but Paris. Godard shows us a city in a state of change. A new city is being constructed but it doesn't shape itself to the wishes and expectations of the inhabitants. On the contrary, they must adapt their needs to fit the workings of the city. Thus conflicts arise, and also an isolation which Godard portrays more concretely and directly than for instance Antonioni in his tales of modern life.

The main character of the film is a married woman in her thirties. She has two children and she lives in the midst of the harshly urbanised townscape which Godard manages to represent with an equally strong sense of vulgarity and fascination. The day of her life that Godard has chosen to portray is no extraordinary day either for Juliette or for those women who might identify themselves with her situation. 'You go on using gas and water and electricity without giving a thought to the end of the month when the bills will have to be paid. It is always the same. Either it is no money to pay the rent or no telly. Or else we keep the telly, but no car. Or a washing-machine but no holiday. Therefore in no way a normal life.'

Godard puts the blame squarely on those responsible for planning her environment (Paul Delouvrier, prefect and later head of administration, is even mentioned by name). Godard does not hide his radical political views, and he openly accuses the authorities of playing into the hands of big-time capitalism in creating an environment which exercises an economic constraint on the people in it.

Still: Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle, *Marina Vlady as Juliette.*

PARFUMERIE

Still: three scenes from Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle.

Godard sees an inhuman milieu emerging in which the inbuilt demand for an ever higher standard of living creates a feeling of menace. Instead of revolting, the workers have adjusted to the bourgeois system and its conditions of capital distribution and acquisitiveness. Through overtime and a second job they endeavour to live up to the economic demands that are put on them. They are the victims of an image of society dictated by advertising and they find it difficult to defend themselves against the seductive slogans advertising inessential goods and services. Consider the absurd *déjeuner sur l'herbe*, with all its synthetic goods, which Godard lays out in the film.

Juliette is also the perfect consumer. In her, there is no hesitation between the wish and its fulfilment. She reacts languidly to the impulses to action that she receives from modern advertising techniques. She prostitutes herself to give force to this action. Juliette lives right in the middle of what Godard sees as the comic strip of present-day life and society. There is (according to one of Juliette's customers) America *über Alles*—and *pax américaine* is the super-economical (brain-) washing-powder.

Godard is preoccupied with world problems and futilities. Juliette's husband who works in a garage is also a radio ham. He sits at his receiver tuning in to voices and words about far-flung theatres of war, present and future. He has tuned in to the red line between Washington and Saigon; he hears President Johnson ordering an escalation of the war and a stepping-up of the bombings of Hanoi and Haiphong, Peking and Moscow.

In the form of a fable and through a child (Juliette's small son, Christophe) Godard

expresses a dream. Christophe says that in his dream he was all alone, strolling down a long pavement which was so narrow that it could only take one person. Then he sees a pair of twins in front of him, walking towards each other on the narrow pavement. Suddenly they meet and fuse together into one person. Christophe says: 'And then I realised that they were North and South Vietnam united.'

One might describe the construction of *Deux ou trois choses* by likening it to a number of transparent discs differently patterned which have been put on top of one another. Together they form a complete image. Remove one disc, shut your eyes to one aspect of Godard's film, and the pattern will change, however slightly. The film reflects a kind of new realism with quite a few qualities in common with the *nouveau roman*: economy and precision of detail; a vision giving an extraordinary depth of perspective through the sudden switches between close-up and long-shot.

Deux ou trois choses has a quality which is completely lacking in Godard's earlier work—hesitation. The film has a contemplative feeling and a calm which is unusual. Godard tries to find order in the chaos which he experiences. He says that he wants to define himself with one or two simple words. 'Ensemble' is a word which often occurs in his and Juliette's conversations, but the communion they are looking for seems impossible for them to attain. The film reflects homelessness—social, political and moral.

Godard queries his semantic theories from earlier films. The language (the pictorial language, the images) is not enough to give a true, precise likeness of reality. One ought to construct a new language, says Juliette at one point in the film, the language being the house in which man lives. In *Deux ou trois choses* Godard contributes with a new style, an opportunity for change in seeing and communicating.

'How it is possible to show that this afternoon Juliette and her friend Marianne arrived at the garage by the Porte des Ternes where Juliette's husband is working? How can I explain what took place there? Well certainly, there is Juliette, her husband and the garage. But are those particular words and images necessarily the right ones? Are there others? Do I speak too loud? Do I move up too close with my images or am I too far away?'

So Godard lets his camera rest on Juliette and her girl-friend. On the red Austin which is gliding through a giant washing machine On Juliette's husband who is talking to Juliette across the windscreen. On Juliette's car being cleaned. On the sun shining on the car, making it sparkle. On the figures of the dashboard. Are we convinced? Do we understand? Are we bored?

Godard gives as much attention to the things surrounding the characters of the story as to the characters themselves. They are shown up in all their expressiveness and beauty. The washed-down Austin could not be a more perfect advertisement for modern industry. There has not been such a beautiful poem written in praise of utility objects since Resnais' short film on plastic, *Le Chant du Styrène*. But more often the angle becomes more scornful, more drastic, as in Godard's ironic image of the modern service establishment: a combined brothel and crèche where the attendant wants payment in the form of tins. The French accent is underlined by the colour. Red, white and blue are dominant, and the play of colour often has an ironic effect.

The division of interest between men and things is valid, for in *Deux ou trois choses* Godard shows us people who allow themselves

Still: Marina Vlady as Juliette Janson.

to be governed by things: man in the machine age. Juliette makes '*amour à l'italienne*' for a Vog dress or a coat by Paco Rabanne; Marianne, too, supplements her wardrobe through prostitution, and a 42-year-old woman testifies that she has lost her job—maybe to a computer? But there are revolutionaries too: an Algerian boy who is introduced as the hope of the twentieth century or a coloured couple making love in a dark basement—or more romantic characters like Paulette the little manicurist who talks about her work, her fiancé, her literary interests and her plans for the future in a happy home surrounded by children and books, the most moving confession in the film.

Between the confessions are the director's own whispered meditations on the society he paints and the rules that govern his art. The commentary guides and gives stability to the rhapsodic episodes of the film. Sometimes the words are at odds with the pictured material—the people and the things—and out of this conflict Godard creates emotionally charged and sensually exciting experiences. He might for instance interrupt the objective description of the car-washing in the garage and point his colour camera into the leafy branches of a tree, in a poetic side-stepping movement. The unexpected is always lying in wait behind the most concrete pictures, challenging our imagination and our feelings. The sudden shifts when logic and sobriety turn into pure seduction are very much part of the charm of the film and the secret of Godard's suggestiveness.

In *Deux ou trois choses* there is a sequence radiating an almost magical tension, a scene in which Godard is immersed in thought over a cup of espresso coffee. The whole 'scope screen is taken up with the surface view of the coffee in the cup and the bubbles rising from the sugar as it dissolves. The film disappears. The observed object takes possession of the screen. Fantastic winter streets and cosmic *motifs* are revealed within the shell of the blue cup. Or are we maybe seeing cells dividing themselves in rapid mutations? Microcosm and macrocosm in a fascinating synthesis.

And behind it a commentator (Godard) reposing in his quiet meditations.

'. . . as every event changes my daily life, as I constantly fail to communicate, or rather to understand, to love, to be loved, and as every failure makes me feel lonely, as . . .

As I can neither free myself from the objectivity that is crushing me nor from the subjectivity which is driving me into exile . . .

As it is impossible for me either to raise myself up to life or fall back into nothingness . . .

I must listen. I must look around me more attentively than ever . . . Look at the world . . . *mon semblable . . . mon frère . . .*

The world today where revolutions are impossible, where bloody wars threaten me, where capitalism is beginning to doubt its rights, where the working classes are in retreat.

Where progress, the devastating progress of science makes future centuries haunt the present, where the future is more present than the present, where far-flung galaxies are at my door . . . *Mon semblable . . mon frère . . .*

Where does it begin? But where does what begin?

God created heaven and earth. Of course, but it sounds rather too cowardly and facile. One should be able to express it more clearly. Say that the limits of language are also those of the world, that the limitations of my language are the limitations of my world, and through speech I limit the world; I end it.

Logical and mystical death will abolish these limitations. There will be neither questions nor answers.

All is erased . . . all is linked up again . . .'

ASIDES ON GODARD

Raymond Durgnat

I. GOD, GODARD, GODOT.

Godard is of Swiss Calvinist stock. His art is a basically Protestant one. Grey, ascetic images reduce the world to a concept of itself. He photographs Karina like Dreyer photographs Falconetti, but reduces her to just a face, mysterious, melancholy, ethereal even in gaiety, where Dreyer's images are sculptural, anguished. There's flesh in Dreyer, despite the resonances, resemblances between flesh and stone, which, asceticism apart, carry the implication that people are real and strong like stone, like rocks of ages. But in Godard everything is a grey, jerky flow. Godard's is an art of the plastic age, of fluent, pliable, putty characters.

Godard's words-on-images suggest an agnostic, nay nihilistic Bresson, and indeed the Catholic Critic Henri Agel accused Bresson of Jansenism, which is a heresy with many Calvinistic connections. Godard's is a Calvinistic mind astray in a Godless, soulless world, a world of accidents which because they lack essence lack even a felt existence. . .

II. GODARD AND THE DEATH OF E. M. FORSTER

Godard films which seem to me ludicrously bad fascinate several people whose opinions I respect, and I explain their infatuation as follows (which infuriates them). His evocations of an emotionally and morally lost world would appeal to my acquaintances' disillusionment, their pain, as nice, idealistic, upper-middle-class liberals, finding themselves in today's cool, fluid, cynical world. His despair catches their own melancholy. His best films are those where feelings of pain and loss are most plausible: *A Bout de Souffle*, *Le Petit Soldat* and one or two passages in *Pierrot le Fou*, notably the beautiful ending. The feelings are plausible because the characters have positive, focused desires, the frustration of which we observe.

There are of course other reasons for responding to Godard's duller films. Ony may be a connoisseur of remarkable idioms and styles. One may be sceptical to the point of nihilism, suffering from a moral and emotional impotence behind which lies just the breath of remorse that appears in Godard's films. Godard is, in a sense, the ghost of Losey, the Losey of moral anti-matter. Losey is a violent puritan, Godard a broken one. In Losey there's a certain fascination with moral nihilism. One can imagine *Le Petit Soldat* filmed by Losey. But Godard's *King and Country* would reduce Hamp's pain to a wry shrug.

Or one may admire Godard's bad films because of their sense of the world as unreal—a schizophrenic art for a schizophrenic epoch. But for myself, I'm bored with art that's merely symptomatic: it goes straight into the Light Entertainment category, when, at least, it entertains. I prefer analysis, diagnosis, prognosis and, if only by implication, intimations of a new synthesis.

And Godard's lesser films say nothing that hasn't been said better by, say, Malle's *Le Feu Follet*, Welles's *The Trial*, Antonioni's *L'Avventura*, Bergman's *The Silence*, Losey's *The Damned*; not to mention 'commercial' films

like *The Mistress*, *The Doll*, or *The World Ten Times Over* (which, as a study of prostitution, nihilism and non-communication, makes *Vivre sa Vie* look like moron glacé).

III. HEAR ME TALKIN' TO YA . . .

But it may be said that Godard's films are not about their dramatic subject, which are only pretexts. *Vivre sa Vie* is not about prostitution, but about communication. To which one may reply that:

1. there's no reason why a film shouldn't be about two things at the same time: say, the experience of prostitution, linking with difficulties of communication, and that:
2. Godard's stylistic sensitivity and originality is at its sharpest when it gears in with his subject-matter.

One thinks of his most painful film, *Le Petit Soldat*. It is almost a Bressonian soliloquy over a silent film yet a very modern silent film, as Coutard's fingertip-held camera hosepipes along rooftops or flicks from one face to the next. Certain photograms have an almost orthochromatic anguish; natural sounds are eerily excluded (again, like Bresson, dematerializing the world); the streetscapes are as evocative as those of Kirsanoff's *Ménilmontant*.

Throughout the film alternates a quality of semi-abstraction and of beautifully textured moments, notably the virtual *pas-de-deux* between photographer and model, though that too is a pun, and is spiritualized by the music of Haydn—a nice reference: advertising art has a graceful formality. Godard has a fine ear for such original affinities. There's a car journey as winding and endless as *Vertigo*. The back of Karina's head becomes a mask. The reiteration of '*A quoi tu penses?*' relates the photographic session and the torture session. Michel Subor's cut-price Brando is a just-about-adequate mouthpiece for Godard's paradoxes, including a remark which furnishes the key to Godard's moral vision: 'Perhaps it is with remorse that liberty begins.' Otherwise, Godard is the worst director of actors since Sternberg and Bresson; and how can he not be, when he does not believe in feelings?

But Godard's *pointillisme* of ideas lacks a backbone (aesthetic and moral—the two are one) in *Vivre sa Vie* and *Une Femme Mariée*. The pimp suddenly goes off into the vocabulary of an RTF documentary about prostitution (and a doctor rambles off into impersonal vaguenesses about contraception). Sex is shown by day, in a white sunlit hotel room, with cars passing, so becomes as cold as a white towel. Brice Parain discourses on the necessity of detachment and philosophy (which is pouring water on a drowning pussycat). The two studies in woman, prostitute and wife, are studies in philosophical perfidy, in knowing and lying. Even the views of Paris that appear and just fade out, in the 'album' style that was quite orthodox in silent films, here have an eerily cold, elegiac meaning, by contrast with current syntax, where we expect an establishing shot to lead into some emotionalising action. One thinks of the photographs of Eugène Atget. Hence, too, the private jokes: Karina as the tart is going to be, or has been 'in films' with, she says, Eddie Constantine, a flash-forward to *Alphaville*.

The play of gestures in Godard yields a code about doubt. In *A Bout de Souffle*, Belmondo dying rubs his thumb over his lips, a gesture which Seberg catches from him at the end. Lemmy does it too. In *Charlotte et son Jules*, Belmondo, startled, wipes his expression off his face like one of the three Stooges, after Charlotte, too, whimsically wipes an expression on and off and on and off.

***Still:* '. . . *reduces her to just a face*'—*Anna Karina as Nana in* Vivre sa Vie.**

Godard works engagingly on the spectator's awareness that his film is a film, e.g. the narrator-hero speaks the credits (*Histoire d'Eau*), the hero addresses the audience (*Pierrot le Fou*); the effect is at once insolent and elegiac, intimate and forlorn.

Vivre sa Vie is an ironical title; that's the one thing the heroine doesn't do. Instead, she is reduced to an unfeeling object. First, her heart leaves her mind, then her perceptions quit her body, then she lets herself be sold, and then she's shot; total separation. Like *Une Femme Mariée* it's about talk-about-being only being beating-about-the-bush and not being the being itself. In the later film the child has his simple rules; the humanist intellectual stresses that man must understand before he affirms (Godard neither understands nor affirms). The wife lies, the husband assents in her lies by his complacency, and lies too; the doctor's 'authoritative', impersonal vocabulary outrages the dignity of the individual to whom he speaks.

Similarly, *Alphaville* isn't science-fiction at all. It isn't even what one could call 'conceptualist art', as when Raymond Roussel, Boris Vian, J. G. Ballard or for that matter Alain Resnais in *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* allow to exist 'impossible worlds' whose right to existence is a purely verbal, conceptual one: theological worlds. But in *Alphaville*, the technological references are simply a network of metaphors, If Godard talks about 'galactic space' and shows us a car driving down a road it's because seeing a road as 'galactic space' is a characteristic schizophrenic experience and Godard is talking about schizophrenia. Schizophrenic too are the neg-pos reversals as Lemmy flees. The schizophrenia is not only that of Overkill, but of well-adjustment in our bourgeois-technological world. *Mon Oncle*'s house was an oasis in it; Lemmy fights his way out of it.

IV. GODARD AS PHILOSOPHY'S CON-MAN

Godard's films like Losey's go in twos—two on flirtation (*Tous les Garçons s'appellent Patrick*, *Histoire de l'Eau*—where the flood background becomes, by virtue of inserts of newsreel aerial views, as extensive and ominous as the spread of *Alphaville*), two on cool, flip Belmondo being quit by his woman (*Charlotte et Son Jules*, *A Bout de Souffle*), two on war and murder (*Le Petit Soldat*, *Les Carabiniers*), two on women (*Vivre Sa Vie*, *Une Femme Mariée*), two on passion (*Le Mépris*, *Pierrot le Fou*), two on madness vs. logic (*Alphaville*, *Pierrot le Fou*).

Yet, precisely because he withdraws from reality, they're all the same film; the whole of *Alphaville* is merely a tautology of the overtones in *A Bout de Souffle*. Missing in *Vivre sa Vie*, lyrical as it is, are the humanity and the nuances that appear in so much conversation by non-artists. To take another girl who lived her life, one thinks of Christine Keeler: 'Ward said it was all right provided I never developed the mentality of a prostitute.' There's a better story about split personality in that remark than Godard's berserk exploitation of the notion of unreality. Especially when linked with: 'My life revolved around him from morning to night. We were like brother and sister.'

A Bout de Souffle and *Le Petit Soldat* are perhaps Godard's best films because, jump-cuts apart, they are completely traditional in their conception, construction and dialogue. Indeed, they are models of their kind. The traditional qualities provide a holding context for divergencies from tradition, the deliberate dips into unreality. After the second film, Godard's nihilism and sense of unreality leave the picture for the paint, and begin to sabotage his style. (It's curious how many film cynics do this. Allegret and Clouzot turned commercial; in this art-film-era, Godard turns 'anti-commercial'. . .)

Still: Le Petit Soldat—*Bruno Forestier (Michel Subor) in the no-man's-land between Lang and Bresson.*

Godard's obtrusive anti-commercial appeal is facilitated by his in-jokes (we all like to feel we're In), by his very verbal, literary approach, and by what may seem to be an avant-garde style. Yet all his experiments with narrative amount to a compromise between the narrative and the essay: a characteristic novelist's technique, from Fielding's digressions, many of which were art about art, to Aldous Huxley's, and in this Chris Marker's and Agnes Varda's movies have gone far beyond Godard's: being more demanding, they are less popular. Godard's 'impressionism', in his literary approach to real life (which he takes care not to approach too closely), in his sense of unreality, he reminds one of the first cinematic *avant-garde*, of Delluc's *Fièvres* and L'Herbier's *Eldorado*, which were also weary mood-pieces. Delluc used what he fondly hoped was a symbolist approach; L'Herbier used appliqué optical tricks, which rarely worked, except as *ideas*, because they were the work of

a literary man who thought in terms of visual ideas rather than of visual experiences. In contrast, Godard exploits with commendable aplomb the mish-mash of word and image, of seen word, the stream of word-over-glimpse, which are characteristic perceptual modes of the 'sixties and are a major reason for his fascination. But Godard's films have the same ethereal ring, the same preciosity.

As a philosopher, however, Godard is Colin Wilson with a sense of humour. *Alphaville* has amusing ideas (the cinema with tip-up seats; the execution like a happening; Lemmy using an old safety-razor, like the G-Man; the loving parodies of Spillane, e.g. 'I shoot first because life's too short to ask questions').

The best in Godard is in his verbal gags, often extremely sad. One might well compile a little book of his reflections: 'The Wisdom of Jean-Luc Godard', and I would rather read the script of *Alphaville* and imagine the film, than see Godard's clumsy transcription. But the major ideas are old hat and square (Who's afraid of the big bad Computer) as well as plagiarisms (word-revision and novel-writing machines from 1984, computers and seedy Akim Tamiroff from *The Trial*). And most of the visual effects are crummy by comparison with, say, Dick Lester.

Many of his best scenes are filmed anecdotes (like the man with the tune in *Pierrot le Fou*). Often, hopes and ideals are fossilised into paintings or books—notably the big comic-strip tome featured so ostentatiously in *Pierrot le Fou*. Its heroes, a band of engagingly craven rascals called *Les Pieds Nickelés*, lived out this hero's nostalgia for innocence and action, a nostalgia which he, in fact, lives out, only to end in an emptiness as utter as if he had stayed at home. Godard's eye for visual symbolism is a penetrating one: the sticks of explosive which Pierrot drapes over his shoulders at the end resemble waxen Icarus wings. Nor is the symbolism over-simplistic: if Pierrot paints his face blue before dying, is it blue for the sky, blue for the blues, blue like Picasso's blue or blue in neo-Dada meaninglessness? It's for all these things. . . .

Smart as his philosophical gags are, they co-exist with a curious philosophical archaism. *Alphaville* introduces us to *conscience* as an innate entity, to the *inherent* comprehensibility of words, to an *amor vincit omnia* sentimentality, that hark back, if not to Thomism, at least to Platonism, an approach to man and to cultural values that one would have thought Freud had finished with once and for all.

There are those who cling to traditional notions of rationalism and objectivity. There are those who can accept neither traditional notions nor depth-psychology, and engage in existentialist tussles with 'the absurd' or '*le néant*', especially if they're from the Catholic (Cahiers du Cinéma) or the Anglican (Sight and Sound) bourgeoisie. Or they may return to religion, or wish they could (Malcolm Muggeridge is just Cardinal Heenan out of drag). Or they may feel driven to reject all -isms, and to feel that the only integrity is in incessant doubt, non-affirmation, subversion. Or they may accept notions of the unconscious, and so still believe in causes, structures, emotions, and in 'subversion' by lucidity rather than doubt. There is no unconscious in Godard. He is a systematic doubter, not so much of outside reality, which appears in his work as neutral, but of the mind, because there is nothing in his mind between the conscious purpose and nothingness. Again, his approach is extremely archaic: the last gasp of Cartesianism. From 'I think, therefore I am' to 'I'm not sure what I think, therefore I don't exist'.

V. GODARD AND THE PARAS

The under-the-sheets love-scene in *A Bout de Souffle* could be the least erotic bed-scene ever

filmed. Godard's *Le Mépris* is about sexual-emotional diffidence, Moravia's *noia*. The emotional listlessness and the grey, flimsy non-sensuousness of his films suggest that Anna Karina's lovers have all taken being flip to the point of impotence, and sit there watching her obsessively. From the cool to the frigid. Karina is not Godard's anima and ex-wife, but his posthumous life, his nirvana, his ghost (castrated, sensitive, passive, alive). He watches her try to live (that is to say, be tortured, prostituted and shot by personifications of his confused indifference).

Alphaville is the emotional emptiness, the whirring-and-clicking of Godard's mind, against which Lemmy-Bogey-the-man-Belmondo-wishes-he-were protests. But he protests by the hysteric reflex of an unthinking brutality ('life's too short to ask questions'), recalling Spillane's Mike Hammer, and, of course, the nihilist acquiescence of *Le Petit Soldat*. What a contrast with Franju's *Judex*, where the violence is only a pretext for the magic of tenderness! *Alphaville* is just another version of *Our Man Flint*. In both cases our brutal hero sets out against the scientists who with their computers and their artificial paradise turn women into pleasure-units.

Aldrich said so much about it all in *Kiss Me, Deadly*—his *tour-de-force* of 'dehumanised style'.

In France, Godard is commonly called Fascist; in England he has become the darling of the sensitive plants of Sight and Sound. Without calling all nihilists Fascists, perhaps we should take more seriously the nastiness in Godard's films.

Le Petit Soldat is morally as gripping as it's depressing, like *Psycho*. Our hero veers from bragging about his blandness over the men he's killed to proving how sensitive he is ('eyes Velazquez-grey or Renoir-grey?'). Concentration camp commandants were great at loving classical music, and the OAS fought for the sake of Western culture. Godard's hero is half-redeemed by being so weak, so green, so wistful. He's a bad Nazi rather than a good one; a putty-Nazi.

Not that Godard is a 'para'; his diffidence cuts both ways. But the comparison with Antonioni, whose characters share the anguish, the doubt, the non-feeling, of Godard's, isn't irrelevant. Godard's shrug off grief, turn flip and empty; Antonioni's don't lose their moral compass-points, hold on to their humanity. Not that Godard lacks lucidity about this. '*Aprés tout, je suis con . . .*' says Belmondo in *A Bout de Souffle*. And Godard's attitude is one of complicity rather than of contempt. Complicity with the morally contemptible is one of the major artistic modes of our time, from the *acte gratuite* in Gide to Camus' *L'Etranger*, and innumerable commercial films, e.g. René Clément's *Plein Soleil*. Thus Antonioni's films have their overtones of archaism: his characters are worthy, and they care about not caring. His films have a brooding, Bergman-like intensity. Godard's characters' recognition of their own '*connerie*' may be a plus feature, but isn't necessarily a redeeming one. At the time of the OAS crisis, Antonioni's characters would do what they could, while Godard's characters would do nothing, and rapidly be sodomised by the Paras mushrooming in the grey skies.

Godard wears dark glasses to hide from the world the fact that he's in a permanent state of ocular masturbation, rubbing himself off against anything and everything on which his eye alights. The flicking glance of his camera is the constant dribble of premature ejaculation. It is an unseeing stare. Godard keeps babbling on about the world being absurd because he can't keep an intellectual hard on long enough to probe for any responsive warmth.

LA CHINOISE

Jean-Louis Comolli

Five young people try to live according to the tenets of Mao in an apartment lent by a girl whose parents are away. Véronique (Anne Wiazemsky) is studying philosophy. Guillaume (Jean-Pierre Léaud) is an actor. Henri (Michel Sémianko) works at the Institute of Economics. Kirilov (Lex de Bruijn) is a painter. Yvonne (Juliette Berto) represents the peasant class; she came to Paris to work as a domestic help but has ended up as a prostitute. With the help of the others she is trying to break with her old life. She looks after the flat and cooks. At one of their weekly meetings, only Henri votes against Véronique's proposal for the assassination of a prominent academic; Henri's defence of co-existence with the bourgeoisie results in his expulsion from the group for revisionism. Kirilov is obsessed with death and after pleading to be allowed to carry out the assassination, he commits suicide. The assassination, which is planned as the first of a series which will lead to the closure of the universities, is performed by Véronique after she has mistakenly murdered the wrong person. At the end Guillaume is working as an actor reading Racine and Brecht from door to door. Yvonne sells 'L'Humanité Nouvelle' *outside the Métro while nearby Henri is selling* 'L'Humanité Dimanche'. *Yvonne has to leave the flat because the owners are coming back and the university vacation is over.*

This is an age of reason, the moment of keen consciousness when foresight takes the place of sight, signs seem indicated rather than indicative and images are blurred even if not obscured or falsified by messages. *La Chinoise*—we must end up with the comforting legend of a muddled and confused Godard—begins with the statement that apart from images there is no outlet for ideas and that ideas are invariably not the way towards images but the reverse.

A first viewing of the film reveals that the profusion of ideas spoken, written and acted is proportional to the sobriety of the images representing them, the relatively small number of scenes and the meagre selection of things shown in each of them. The few sets are sparsely decorated, there is little movement on and off the screen, few colours, as if the main idea behind the formal planning of the film were to empty rather than fill the stage, the image, the screen. Almost denuded images, words bared of language, spoken again and again as much, if not more, for the sake of hearing them as for their meaning, words floating at large on a deserted screen. Nevertheless, the images, the words and the relationship between them—simple insofar as the parameters are few and their intersections precise—give the impression of a paradoxical avalanche of meaning and information. Reading the critics, from *Figaro* to *L'Humanité Nouvelle*, gets us to the point where the film seems to have been, if not truly seen, at least perceived and even interpreted through a sort of capricious kaleidoscope. For not only do the accounts disagree about the acts and gestures of the characters but these acts and gestures themselves vary according to the account. There is no doubt that the confusion must originate somewhere. But is it really in the film—this film which right away gives us, like the

admonitory preamble to any interpretation, the warning splashed across the middle of the first shots: to 'confront vague ideas with clear images'.

Clear images and fuzzy ideas—as if this were possible, as if, more exactly, *La Chinoise* were not the kind of film where the sharpness of the image, each image after another, puts over and clarifies each idea. For one can unerringly arrive at the bare idea by confining oneself to the image, which is austere and pure, transparent and precise, clear as ever, yet an image thrown by light in the cinema, by confining oneself to the image which is cool, distilled and cleansed of any suspicion of shadow.

The image here will perhaps not be the projection of an image already in existence, registered and preserved in a showcase, not without loss of quality, but rather the momentary throwing out of an idea snatched the instant it arises, even before it can leave any trace in the bundle of rays which flash it on the screen. Or could it not well be that the idea is born from this image? Here is the central question of *La Chinoise*. Should we, in the cinema, believe what we see? Guillaume unwraps his bandages by the image of a Chinese student unwrapping his bandages, not to convince his audience, which would be on the level at which ideas have priority, but precisely to show that under the mask of ideas and the layer of preconception lies the smooth clear zone of representation, of the image which is its own metaphor. In the same way, Guillaume here connects gesture with words, that is to say he *acts*—which is the metaphor of the theatre. Or should we believe ideas? Take as an example Henri's analysis. In following his discourse and his explanations you get the impression of going on a kind of journey; from idea to idea along the thread of his phrases one begins to re-examine the film, superimposing on it a new unfolding of significance. So what about the image now? Fixed, motionless, it effectively rules out even the possibility of any advance. Then, in effect, the film has a pause which leads first to a 'freezing' of Henri's dissertation then to a break in the train of thought. He brings this about himself with a revision, a critical move, which is to reassign the meaning that is all he can have in the film as a whole: that of marking time. Here, unknown to the idea, the image presents it with a barrier.

Does it stem from the flatness of the colours, the white walls, like the painter's canvas, or writing paper or the screen which owes something to both? Or is it the uniform stage lighting which bathes the space filmed and deprives it of a feeling of depth, reducing it to the two dimensions of the screen (the only movements being lateral ones of entry or exit on the yard or garden side)? This light seems not to come from the usual sources, behind or level with

the screen or emanating from it, but on the contrary to come from in front of it as if from a bank of theatre footlights or, what comes down to the same thing, squarely from the projector. Or must we even go back to the emulsion, or to the nervous cells of Raoul Coutard? Ideas are formulated all the time here in terms of luminosity, lighting, contrast, angles of incidence and reflection, and even the words are printed out visually. It is no surprise, then, that *La Chinoise* is altogether Godard's most plastic and political film.

What all films timidly suggest, that the audience read the images, *La Chinoise* expressly demands: the image is to be read; there is nothing there that need not be read, and nothing can be read in that is not there. To read the image, or rather decipher it like a manuscript seen for the first time, is not to interpret the signs, decode the figures nor analyse the premises and conclusions. Rather it is the patient spelling out, shot by shot, of its 'Constituents', with the subtlety that it is the image that makes up its own constituents, that visibly manifests them. From this sort of identification of the *facts of the image*, a scientific rather than critical process, can result a second, more comprehensive and critical examination.

But the image has a literal nature to which all literary comment on images at first must conform. If the image is meant to show rather than be shown, it is not a *place* as one comfortingly pretends to believe, but an *act*, just as it commits itself rather than is committed and there is nothing *in* the image because there is nothing *without* it. This is an absolute image, sufficient to itself and not putting over any reality but its own. How could one wish it to give out or contain any significance apart from itself? Let us say that it feeds on it like a vampire.

If thinking language is not 'confusing words and things', reading the cinema is not confusing facts of the image and facts of existence, cinematic objects and political objects. If, as Philippe Sollers seems to, one reproaches Godard, for example, for opposing a fictional character (Véronique Supervielle) and a real personality (Francis Jeanson) on the same film set, one is supposing possible the coexistence even within the film of two levels of reality, one imaginary and the other documentary. But faced with Véronique, Francis Jeanson is never anything but an image inside an image which refers only to itself and is its only and its whole reality, as much fiction as documentary. In *La Chinoise*, during the time we see him, the image of Francis Jeanson is the whole material reality of the abstraction named 'Francis Jeanson'. Discussion on the cinema has always had to put up with handy dichotomies like fiction and document, imaginary and real, onirism and truth. But certain films, such as *Persona*, *Belle de jour*, *The Man Who Shaved His Head*, *The Big Mouth*, *Jaguar*, as well as *La Chinoise*, tempt us to avoid them. When we talk about the cinema, let's grant each film its own reality, without reference to some outer, eternal reality. What matters in the cinema is what we can see and hear (or read).

And as for the images of *La Chinoise*, they do not describe a reality or even a political fiction, they *are* this reality, or this fiction; better still, they make it. Form comes, for Godard, before formulation. Thus the political aspect, far from stretching its net over the film, arises and develops from it with the same right as the other formal experiences. It moves freely and would certainly break loose quickly if the square of the axes, the rectitude of the angles, the intensity of the colours, the accuracy of the movements, the logic of the construction, the cutting, shot to shot, class to class, system to system did not so conscientiously complete the images.

LA CHINOISE

Jacques Bontemps

'Since I have got back to zero, that is where I have to start again.' It is on this phrase and a few packets of detergent on the grass that *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* ends, refusing to give in to the temptation of despair. And Godard begins exactly there with *La Chinoise*. There? On those elements labelled 'Pax' or some other name, which have just been in question and called upon to show their meaning as symbols, the meaning of the reality for which they are an anagram and which is already all image and word, written or spoken, before the film. The problem of gathering together the story of the world and fashioning himself a tool appropriate to the task by inquiring relentlessly on its power: this is the profound source from which Godard now draws his inspriation. The questions fade into the background of the films Ollier thinks are 'odd numbers' (*A bout de souffle*, *Une Femme est une femme*, *Les Carabiniers*, *Bande à part*, *Pierrot le Fou* . . .). But at the same time it is a matter of increasing urgency to recognise the need pressing in from all sides, '*l'absence de demeure*, the impossibility of living which covers and haunts the HLM housing estates, the lack of poetry like the void between the banks of a lost river,' (Deguy), the publicity dictatorship and the gangrene of violence 'and as a certain Marx remarked, a few other small things' in whose number must be included the one the said Marx rightly considered central, to know that I must pay for my work.

These then are the two or three things that have to be coaxed out. Just two or three since I can see only this world in which I am, *of which* I am, from my limited point of view—even supposing, in the context of Godard, that the bonds of alienation leave me the possibility of *seeing* what it is. On that one can only refer to Merleau-Ponty; Godard himself quoted 'Sens et non-sens' in which one is not forbidden to read between the lines that perhaps it is up to art to cure the illness which we owe to a perspectivist perceptual structure, and up to the cinema by changing scales and by extraordinary approaches to make us adopt other points of view simply in order to make us become aware of our own. Koehler's Gestalt psychology emphasises all that. So Godard willingly proceeds with a perpetual coming and going between the very small and the very large when, for example, a TSF station becomes bomb-damaged rubble, bubbles on coffee become galaxies and monstrous machinery simply a percolator. It is similarly a matter of keeping the *Umwelt* or milieu tightly woven. And of raising sexual debauchery in a big hotel to the coefficient of a certain sign (in that case PAN AM), a certain flag (red and white stripes with stars on a blue ground in the top left corner), another debauch (this time warlike) and some inscriptions with a pickaxe of completely proletarian graphics in the Place de la Concorde. The tenuous but strong connection between, for example, Hanoi, a Palace and a builder's yard in Paris, is adequately demonstrated. (Contrast this fertile *interaction* with the parallelism of Claude Lelouch's frightful *Vivre pour vivre*.) This leads us straight to the litany of 'and afterwards' and the bitter definition of man as 'not yet dead'. In the end

the film investigation reaffirms the existence of a close unity on the part of objects and such a radical isolation on the part of the subject that the problem of *inter*-subjectivity needs reconsideration.

Being present in his time (and to Godard, such presence takes the place of a lure for the half-foreseen migrations that the work encourages, i.e. of inspiration), assailed by his time has quickly come to mean taking account of a daily experience of the unlivable. 'What is the good of poets in this time of distress?' Hölderlin already wondered—and answered with poems and the affirmation that being poetic would be in the nature of our situation. Merleau-Ponty was no more driven back to despair or the absurd by the sound and fury than Godard. Quite the contrary: 'joining others and joining our present and our past, we see to it that everything has a meaning and achieve, in a word, the whole confused discourse of the world'. It is up to us, like Godard, to dig out and decipher the 'Signs'. Also the open, equivocal endings (which are by the same token, not entirely without hope) of *Made in USA* and *Deux ou trois choses* show us Godard seized by the environment and arousing himself to fight in the places where the enemy claim the world is at peace. He is systematically using the means of war where the most useful weapon in tactics of opposition is denial that the struggle is at its full height. And that is the precise meaning once given by Jean Beaufret to the expression 'being Marxist'.

There we have the origins of *La Chinoise* in which the central question is perhaps how to do something *together* to remedy whatever is not past recall. And there what is all too easily taken for the description of a bad answer is in fact the not too disastrous result of the urgency of making good a lack. It is the learning of a set of rules which will not allow the question to be put suitably until later and requires an even longer wait for anything approaching a firm answer. This is evidently not to the taste of 'strategists' who, as René Char remarks, 'proclaim their infallibility'. But if the poet is really 'the part of the man which rebels at calculated schemes', can he really be reproached for daring to insinuate that the discovery of Marxism (when even this would pass for Leninism) surely does not have an immediate influence and the same infallibility for everyone. Should anyone grudge Godard's five heroes their study holidays since, even if one of them fails in part, another completely and one of the remaining three commits a characteristic error, it does not mean that three out of five have not made great progress. It makes you think of what they will still do: study holidays and nothing less beneficial. And then, perhaps, the crime, since there is a crime, is of showing the first step of an arrival at awareness and a laborious quest for their truth by these young people who refuse to believe in divine miracles as they did in their pious childhood and fall back on those of dialectic *in the way they have learned*. The whole difference, however, comes from what they will stop seeing in the dialectical miracles, what they saw in the divine miracles on the day when the temporary equivalent of a slot machine dispensing complete solutions for all uses will appear to them as a means of critical education. But it is necessary to know enough about management to break out of the stadium in which they still are. One must also pass from the culture of the bourgeois environment to discovery of the proletariat and what they hold of force and wisdom. It needs time and perseverance; they have that. How, then, could their elders see themselves in them (even supposing they have elders, i.e. supposing that all the marxist-leninists are not proletarian)? They must retaliate by seeing in them, if not pupils (only the young negro deserved this fate), at least people who will be able to become

pupils. But no such thing. The film is decidedly not realistic.

But what is realism? If it means tracing a faithful and reassuming copy of reality, the evidence is that Godard does not initially set about it the right way in peopling his imaginary cell with a painter, an actor, a bourgeois university student, a country girl and a chemist. If, on the other hand, it means seeing to it that this cell, in the biological sense this time, refers to something other than itself and, particularly after staining, to the whole organism, then putting the external world (the subject of previous films) into parentheses is perhaps not such a bad method of attempting to understand something about it. The method is one of reducing this world to the dimensions of a flat and introducing elements which are individually plausible but collectively amazing, of borrowing the raw materials from reality and altering them in the imagination. In any case, Husserl was suggesting only this when he announced 'eidetic reduction' as a suitable method of getting hold of the essence. That was already in use a good deal earlier than Godard, but certainly never as systematically. Spending a summer closeted in a flat in the rue Miromesnil is surely a movement of withdrawal which will paradoxically bring Godard's heroes together from Nanterre, the country, the theatre, in short wherever they come from (to say nothing of Sin-kiang and what remains to be discovered). They must then cover this distance which is called theory, to effect a useful return to reality finally made concrete. Godard exerts himself in this as well, except that instead of the vocabulary of theory he uses that of the cinema and gives it its full significance. Through this he escapes the mire of the 'practico-inert' in which many peoples' good intentions have fallen victim. That is to say that the word of political order is validated by art only as far as it is echoed aesthetically. Aragon said 'Each time there is a revolution, the grammar has to be changed first.' If Godard is exemplary on this point, Breton has said all that is necessary about the risk run by anyone who does not follow such an example: 'The order of action demands something other than "books" which claim to *intervene*. The mistake continues so that the written word is received in a realistic way—in spite of the warning by *literature* shouting itself hoarse that it is not realism that matters but *sur*-realism.'

Another poet speaks on this: Michel Deguy, whose outlook conditions what is central in *La Chinoise*. This is what he says in connexion with Genet about the suitable way to break the barrier of realism: 'To overcome the obstacle of realism, one has to destroy reality with comedy. Here for the past few years Ionesco has been notable. (A name which would not be inopportune here, either. It's not surprising, then, to meet him in the bar in *Made in USA*). Anti-direction, dismantling, essential corrosions by the theatre; it is true that that reality can only be surmounted in writing, in plays.

'Destruction of psychology, destruction of action.' These are the Godardian virtues actively at work in *La Chinoise*. It is really this method of 'anti-direction', of dismantling that we have

just mentioned, this comic or aloof tone sometimes approaching the Cocteau of *Enfants Terribles* in clarity, respect, shame, gravity and finally this way of bringing the accidental up against necessity that are characteristic of Godard's writing. Whatever has just been improvised establishes itself on being filmed, and decides what will in the editing, *have* to come before or after with the irreversibility of a piece in a puzzle, a stroke in a painting, or a phrase in a novel. (J. P. Faye has said that the thing that makes Godard's work like a novel is only being written once.) With regard to the rhythm of the action, it has more than ever to be produced in the editing: a strange narrative thread without risk, but nevertheless deficient 'as in those old worn-out films, recklessly chopped up and put together with whole sections lost . . . use of scissors and paste substituting for the director's careful narration in order to restore this overwhelming discontinuity.' (Claude Simon).

As for psychology, one example alone is enough to indicate the fate awaiting it. When Yvonne leaves Henri because he has no political intransigence. (Curiously that was the thing which made a Marxist-Leninist interviewed in '*Le Nouvel Observateur*' No. 149 by François Cavaglioli say of her 'this pitiful abandoned thing manoeuvred by a big intelligent neighbour who knows the secret of complicated words.' He can be advised to keep his pity for the said neighbour whose 'intelligence' consists of rallying the French communist party troops. That Yvonne might be 'alienated' in other respects, that she 'walks the street' is quite accurate. But that this should make her 'stupid' or even a 'silly little hen' as he also says is an *interpretation* of facts which rearranges them in a more heartrending way.) We have not the right to any other explanation than a momentary gesture in the shot of them together; he tries to draw her towards him, she holds back, he gives up and goes away. That's all. And to say it's enough would still be too little since it is this 'essential poverty' which thwarts our expectations, baffles our traditionalism and disturbs us.

But the Juliette of *Deux ou trois choses* warned us what would happen in the end. 'Yes, talking like citations of truth . . . Father Brecht said that.' Father Brecht—the expression was used previously (in the winter of 1964) by J. P. Faye in a text whose title ('*Interphones et entrelacs*') was already evocative of the things Godard has latterly shown us. Two phrases appeared in the exergue of this otherwise very Merleau-Pontyan text: one from Artaud who speaks of the 'interlaced fibres of matter', the other by Hölderlin, 'I find it particularly hard to follow the thread of reasoning in poetry'. These 'interlaced fibres' made up *Deux ou trois choses* and *La Chinoise* was the 'thread' evoked by Hölderlin. And we scarcely leave Father Brecht, either. After his peers have been rubbed off the blackboard of 'the worker in world theatre production', he is the only one who remains, doubtless as a sign of his presence in the heart of each of Godard's playlets. Godard's way of confronting clear images and ideas which are less vague than he really likes to say, comes in effect from a wholly Brechtian inspiration. Here, since one of the first scenes where Guillaume appears intact under his bandages to the point where his little red lips are used as an integral part of the *décor*, passing through the Vietnamese tragedy presented again with toys, the whole film must be taken as witness and it is certainly not by chance that the whole thing takes us back via Brecht to a certain theatre . . . oriental, actually.

This, then is the Chinese way rather than Godard's, of overcoming the difficulty on which Hölderlin placed the accent in the phrase quoted by Faye. At the same time you see how far *La Chinoise* is a political act only in being a

close examination of the cinema and a deep involvement in this art. But an old, firm prejudice wants the partitions between certain areas to be rigorously maintained. Too bad then for anyone who does not take account of them. It is enough that a work has political pretensions and is thus aesthetically innovatory from the outset, so that one can refuse to agree with its way of intervening in the course of things. It is as a poetic act that such a film serves the cause that it is defending; also like all modern works it requires the participation of the spectator whom it has chosen to wake up, rather than to entertain in lethargy by conforming to the psuedo-realistic formulae followed by deeply reactionary work. So why not make the effort to determine his purpose as a function of the object taken up ? Why indulge in ruinous changes of scope ?

Godard's method and the doubtful welcome it receives, all things considered, only stresses once again the remoteness from material things in his illusory connection with daily life to such an extent that 'only a firm and constant resolution' (Descartes) can gain access. Here is the crossing of the paths of the film-maker, poet, philosopher and man of science, who do not know that their aim is only given to them so that it can escape as they approach it. From the Mediaeval 'realissimum' to the 'effectively real' of Hegel and then to Marx, the *eidos* is Plato's *agathos* which hides its true face from us. But the diversity of the attempts often masks a comparable likeness. Thus Godard makes a scandal which affords him the luxury of pointing out 'summarily' and of 'simplifying'. Then thought floods in. And Plato already found fault with the creators of myths, Homer and Hesiod, for continuing to 'tell untrue stories like artists who paint portraits that are unlike the things they claim to represent'. That is why among poets, the city has no business but to compose cheering songs that the citizens will go over in chorus. But *that also* is in need of changing.

Perhaps some misapprehensions could be avoided. Perhaps, then, one would not need to remind those who refuse the teaching of a 'Robinson Crusoe of Marxism-Leninism', only linking together what is self-evident, that they failed to recognise in it, gravely, not only the spirit but also the letter of Marxism, since it is according to the pen of Marx himself that it fell to Robinson on his isle to demonstrate the self-evident, fundamental constant of political economy, the knowledge that things are *worth* what they cost in *work*.

But let's leave the letter and the whim, since what is faithful to the spirit does not yet seem to be obvious. This is, moreover, not so surprising considering that eyes were carefully shut the previous summer in order to accuse Godard in all good faith of laughing at the world. In effect he, Godard, plays with words; he even goes so far as to play with images and sounds, to the point where it becomes a *feast*. His detractors do not play, they think. Nevertheless they think on the assumption (although it has been stigmatised by Merleau-Ponty) that '*l'esprit de sérieux*' alone is suitable for *serious* preoccupations. That can only lead them to the worrying alternative: since '*l'esprit de sérieux*' is rigorously omitted, either Godard is really laughing at us, or he is calling upon our reprobation and on a convincing smile on our part. At whom ? At us others of the bourgeoisie And to expose the '*cynique sinique*' straight away for what he is.

Nothing really obliges those spectators to be Marxists, nor even to understand what they see. If nevertheless they intend to take offence one would not be too well able to remind them how Brecht, true to Godard, added an epilogue to a certain story of cauliflowers 'You, learn to see, instead of looking stupidly. Do something instead of chattering.'

WEEKEND

Robin Wood

Roland (Jean Yanne) and Corinne (Mireille Darc) have been plotting to kill each other: they visit her mother in the country, hoping to benefit from her father's will. The roads are jammed with cars and littered with accident wreckage. When mother proves uncooperative, they murder her. Trying to get home without their car—now wrecked—they are captured by a cannibalistic band of hippie guerrillas. Corinne's husband is killed, she helps eat him, and joins the gang.

Of the established major film-makers, only Godard has consistently, and indeed increasingly, sought directly to face contemporary reality. When an artist reaches the key position in contemporary culture that Godard now occupies, it becomes of particular importance to examine his work clear-headedly and critically and, if one cannot yet solve the problems the films raise, at least to keep them open and attempt to clarify them.

Total exposure to modern reality involves two dangers, neither of which Godard has entirely escaped. The first of these is the great formal crisis of modern art: the tendency of works that honestly reflect a fragmentary and disintegrated culture to become themselves fragmentary and disintegrated. The widespread facile acceptance of this among intellectuals has itself become a force of integration, but the problem exists, by whatever twists the advocates of the 'accidental' and 'indeterminate' try to evade it. The concept of a work of art which one can add to or subtract from at will is not new; it goes back at least to 'The Wasteland', a work which for forty years now has consistently repelled all attempts to make sense of its structure. But only in the 'sixties has the problem become really acute. Hans Keller once put out a radio programme in which he and a colleague improvised noises at random in the studio, giving the resulting 'work' a name and attributing it to a (non-existent) composer. Many of the avant-garde accepted it without hesitation; no one saw through it as a hoax. Even after the secret was out, a young 'musician' once rather wistfully suggested, in my presence, that the 'work' might well have been an accidental masterpiece. And how can anyone prove it wasn't (except of course by a straightforward appeal to old-fashioned common sense)? The story is relevant, I think, to the case of *Made in USA* and its fairly widespread critical acceptance: the accepters, undaunted by the fact that no one seems able to suggest any solid reason for admiring the film, or even to make sense of it beyond the most generalised statements about violence.

Made in USA seemed at the time to mark a disturbing and dangerous turning in Godard's development, a surrender to the temptation to respond to the confusions of modern life with a deliberate incoherence. His subsequent work has happily deprived it of any such significance, placing it as a mere glorified doodle in the margin which affects Godard's important work no more than Picasso's doodles affect his achieved masterpieces; though the comparison suggests how much more dangerous it is to doodle with a movie camera at feature length than with a pencil. At the same time *Made in USA*—like Picasso's doodles—is certainly not

uncharacteristic: it extends a tendency common in Godard's films. Being at once the thinnest and the most obscure of them, it confirms that obscurity in Godard is always in direct proportion to thinness of substance (by which I don't of course mean character-and-narrative substance). It is impossible to draw a firm line between doodling and fully engaged artistic creation: as with Picasso, every intermediate gradation between a trivial squiggle and a fully achieved realisation is possible, and in a Godard film one can shade imperceptibly into another as the intensity of creative involvement grows or lapses. The tendency to doodle is more dangerous in the later films than in the early ones, because the freedom Godard has gained for himself by breaking down conventional narrative greatly facilitates the indulgence of it. Such freedom is essential to Godard's peculiar greatness as an artist. The danger is increased by the prevailing permissive critical climate which, having decided, rightly, that you can't apply fixed rules to works of art, and having failed to develop any acceptably flexible yet meaningful criteria to apply to works that throw out traditional narrative, is divided between rejecting Godard totally or accepting everything he does. When the films evolve a form-and-content framework sufficiently strong to engage Godard to the full (for example, *Une Femme Mariée* and *Weekend*), the doodles are easily assimilated into the whole and don't matter much; though, because a doodle is by nature loose in its organic relatedness, they can offer distracting temptations to speculative interpretation. When Paul Mayersberg claims (*New Society*, 4/7/68) that the 'Battleship Potemkin calling The Searchers' business in *Weekend* is a reference to 'the twin poles of film style . . . Can they get together to save the cinema (the world)?', he offers a plausible deduction about Godard's possible intentions. One can only ask whether the effect is not too facile to sustain any weight of serious interpretation (and what about Johnny Guitar and Gosta Berling?). One could weave endless fantasies of interpretation out of the telescoped Renoir/Truffaut references in the 'Arizona Jules' caption that punctuates the gun-battle at the farmhouse, if one ignored the off-handedness, its obvious nature as a doodle. The most one can say with any confidence is that, in the context defined by the ending of the film and its 'Fin de Cinéma' caption, the cinematic references take on a retrospective poignance.

The second danger of total exposure: the artist, sensitively aware beyond others through the very functioning of his creativity, may harden, perhaps destroy his finer sensibilities —the very qualities on which the fineness of his art depends—to evolve a protective covering of partial insentience. Godard himself is clearly aware of this: Paula Nelson, in one of the more communicative moments of *Made in USA*, wonders why she hasn't wanted to vomit since her involvement in the world of action (*Toujours le sang, la peur, la politique l'argent*). In *A Bout de Souffle* Michel Poiccard protects and ultimately destroys himself by assuming the Bogart/gangster persona. Godard's own attitude was there ambiguous, and it has remained ambiguous ever since, through the embodiments of positive brutalism in his films—Lemmy Caution, Paula Nelson, the revolutionaires of *La Chinoise*, the hippy-guerrillas of *Weekend*—and ambiguity can be a means of subtly indulging tendencies the artist is rationally dubious about. Although the proposition that in the world we live in, effective action will necessarily be ruthless, and that to act effectively one must deliberately deaden one's sensitivity, is perfectly defensible, scruples about it cannot be dismissed as mere squeamishness: the question is whether one

can sacrifice, for the sake of a hypothetical future, precisely those qualities that give life value yet which come to seem increasingly irrelevant. Perhaps the choice is between Godard and despair. One can nonetheless ask whether Godard's tendency to treat violence and horror as comic (the killings in *Pierrot le Fou* and *Alphaville*, the cannibalism in *Weekend*) isn't a form of cheating, or at least an aspect of the protective armour that is unacceptable.

The problem is extremely complex and delicate. Two factors must particularly be taken into account, both fundamental to Godard's genius: his habitual policy and practice of distanciation, and his determination to show only what is real. Paradoxically, the latter explains in part why certain things tend either to be not shown (copulation) or obtrusively stylised (death) in Godard's films. Godard as far as possible shows us things really happening, and happening in real places. But you can't yet show people actually copulating on the screen, and you can't have actors actually killed. So you either don't show it, or stick to your principles of showing only what is real: not a corpse, but an actor covered with red liquid (we are even allowed to watch one of the corpses in *Weekend* breathing). Godard's methods of communicating physical pain and death without actually showing the characters undergoing it are ingenious and interesting, in *Les Carabiniers* (where real death is introduced through newsreel clips), but even more in *Weekend*. What you *can* show is the real killing of a pig or a goose: the reality of the animals' blood and death-struggles is used as a stand-in for the human deaths, even more stylised than usual. Elsewhere in the film, the butchering of the heroine's mother is shown by pouring great washes of red liquid very unrealistically (they come indiscriminately from either side of the screen) over a skinned rabbit: the hideous and bloody carcass that *can* be shown is a substitute for the one that can't. One can, nonetheless, question the *adequacy* of such substitutions, and even ask whether there may not be some lack of human sensitivity in Godard that makes it possible for him to see them as adequate. Arthur Penn, after all, in the scenes of Buck Barrow's wounding and death in *Bonnie and Clyde*, made *human* physical suffering real in a way for which the nervous twitchings of a decapitated goose seem meagre compensation. Such instances of vicarious horror apart, the stylisation is an essential contributory factor to the frequent semi-comic effect of the violence in Godard's films.

This determination to show only what is real is clearly an aspect of Godard's wider determination to expose himself completely to the age we live in, to make of his films an essentialised reflection of the age, and through them to bring his audiences to a wider and keener awareness. The function of the principle of distanciation in relation to this ambition is sufficiently clear. Its practice, though, may seem curiously contradictory, with its most obvious manifestation being the insistence that we are watching, not reality, but a film. The contradiction is more apparent than real: we are after all, watching actors before a camera, and in keeping us aware of this Godard is merely being true to himself. But his films are characterised above all by the continuous tension between the desire to show what is real and the desire to keep one aware of the film as film. The latter is Godard's way to complete freedom, with its attendant dangers; it also makes it possible to tamper with the audience's perceptions in a subtler and more insidious way, of which Godard may well be unaware. Our sense of film-as-film is a safeguard against taking things too literally; it can also became a safeguard—for director as well

as audience—against taking things too seriously. Hence, when we watch a girl having a fish stuffed up her vagina in preparation for being butchered, cooked and eaten, it is our carefully fostered awareness of actors-in-a-film that makes it possible for Godard to present this as half comic.

Humour plays a crucial role in Godard's distanciation, and it is impossible to draw any clear distinction between the legitimacy of this and the humour's brutalising tendency. There is not, I think, a single sequence in either of Godard's two most horrifying and desperate films (*Les Carabiniers* and *Weekend*) from which an element of comedy in some form is entirely absent. It is here that the private jokes, captions and doodles play their part. Again I find the effect ambiguous in the extreme. The comedy achieves the necessary distance between spectator and material, certainly (and also between director and material, allowing Godard to confront the insupportable with something like equanimity). At the same time it cannot but suggest a deliberate adoption of insentience (Eliot's 'Sweeney' poems are closely analogous in this ambiguity of effect). Yet it also suggests an extraordinary resilience on Godard's part to the horrors (I am not thinking only of *physical* horrors) the films so uncompromisingly confront. Both films are characterised by an extreme tension between the utter blackness and despair implicit in their content and the alert, detached, ironic, humorous, exploratory manner. The overall effect of *Weekend* is not entirely negative or even depressing, though any account of its content would suggest it must be so. And this not because of any shirking or blurring of the

Photograph: Godard directing Weekend.

issues: the final disintegration of civilisation as we know it is contemplated with absolute clarity and at the same time quite without complacency. It is as if Godard had unconditionally rejected despair as a useless emotion: however hopeless, one must go on enquiring. If Godard died and went to hell, he would immediately look around and begin making notes. This pervasive humour (at which we are only occasionally tempted to laugh) is usually quite distinct from true 'sick' humour, which is essentially nihilistic and defeatist, inviting complicity in unhealthy attitudes. Even here, however, one is driven at once to make reservations: to judge the complexity of the issue involved, the reader might consider, as a test case, the question of why Godard made the butcher of *Weekend* a comic figure.

Distanciation in Godard needs further examination. One tends to treat as a purely artistic principle, as a matter of deliberate and impersonal choice, what is in fact organically related to Godard's fundamental attitudes and may well be a personal psychological necessity. And there is a consequent danger, with a director whose method is so objective and whose films remain so personal, that a completely individual and idiosyncratic view of modern existence, rooted in a personal psychology, may impose itself on audiences as objective truth. There is a perfect and revealing coherence in Godard's treatment of areas of life that might at first seem unconnected. In his treatment of personal relationships, especially those between men and women, one is struck by the fact that throughout Godard's films characters never make real contact and never help each other. Even in the early narrative films conversations between lovers tend to take the form of mutual interviewing, and the interview or monologue has become increasingly the standard form of communication in Godard's films. From *A Bout de Souffle*, which ends with Patricia Franchini betraying Michel to the police because she daren't commit herself to him, to *Weekend*, which ends with the heroine eating portions of her late husband, relationships between men and women are invariably destructive (the only exception to this, *Alphaville*, is stylised and distanced as a fairy tale). At the same time there is an equally consistent sense of the need for complete personal commitment between people.

This ambivalence is very precisely reflected in Godard's treatment of social or political commitment. Though a positive interest in this is comparatively recent in Godard's work, we can trace a logical development from the earlier films. *Le Petit Soldat* was about a man trying to retract from political involvement. In *Pierrot le Fou* Pierrot's story on the beach about the man in the moon fleeing from both Russian and American indoctrination in order to run away with Anna Karina came across as an explicit rejection of commitment. The last moments of *Made in USA* in a sense repeat this, but give it a sudden positive orientation: the old alternatives of Right and Left are no longer a valid opposition, the questions must be posed in new terms, 'But what?'—the film ends with a question-mark. Between *Pierrot* and *Made in USA* came *Masculin, Féminin*, which now appears the key to all Godard's subsequent work. It was the film in which the interview-cum-monologue (already used fairly 'straight' in *Vivre sa Vie*, *Une Femme Mariée*, etc.) decisively established itself as a formal device of crucial importance to Godard. Here, too, he began the direct questioning of immediate environmental reality, and hence the forcing of the spectator into direct confrontation with it, that is developed through *Deux ou Trois Choses* and *La Chinoise* to certain sections of *Weekend* (the monologues

Still: the guerrillas.

of the Algerian and black African garbage collectors). It is in *Masculin, Féminin* also that Godard's *positive* interest in the possibilities of political action first appears, to become of central importance in the subsequent films. When Godard made *La Chinoise*, a rumour circulated widely that he had suddenly become committed to the tenets of Maoist Communism. It is perhaps worth insisting that there is no cinematic evidence of this. What *La Chinoise* reveals is an intense interest, in the spirit of positive enquiry, in the involvement with Maoist Communism of young French intellectuals. The films from *Masculin, Féminin* onwards are increasingly full of direct statements to the audience, but none of these can be shown to come from Godard himself: they are simply pieces of evidence, testimonies, frequently contradicted or counter-balanced by others within the same film. What is clear is that Godard's desire for positive commitment has increased greatly in his later films, and the films are characterised by the perpetual tension between this intense

desire and a correspondingly intense distrust. Stylistically this basic characteristic of Godard is expressed in the tension between the urge to confront actuality head-on and the all-pervading distanciation, which perfectly expresses this holding-back from commitment. Both Godard's peculiar genius, that makes him the most important contemporary film-maker, and the limitations that are inseparable from it, are determined by this characteristic. No other director in my experience makes one so acutely aware of what life today entails; at the same time, most of us have experienced considerable exasperation at the tendency of Godard's films—especially the freer ones—to say a little about everything and not very much about anything. The exasperation is a superficial response to one of the more superficial aspects of Godard's work—a Godard film is always more than the sum of its reference—but it is not entirely without justification.

Godard's work reveals, in somewhat uneasy relationship to each other, both revolutionary and traditionalist tendencies. The former has always been the more obvious, expressing itself in style and method. Traditional in character, however, is the importance attached to the need (though always frustrated) for final personal commitment between man and woman. There is also the obsessive outpouring of cultural references in the films, as if, having rejected the traditions on which modern society is built, Godard were trying to build up a tradition of his own, by selecting from the European (and American) cultural tradition as a whole (a process paralleled in the work of Eliot, Stravinsky and Picasso).

Still: the guerrillas attack. Following them in the background is the wife (Mireille Darc).

Godard has always, I think, suspected the validity of this: he has been too acutely aware of the gulf between the arts and the greater part of active human existence. The attempt to fuse this personal tradition with dynamic action, by equipping Lemmy Caution with Eluard, now looks like desperate cheating. The revolutionary side of Godard has always been the stronger, and its dominance has increased decisively in the films from *Masculin, Féminin* on. As one might expect, the cultural references have tended to diminish in direct ratio to the development of Godard's interest in political action. The *action musicale* sequence (or rather shot—it consists of a single long take) in *Weekend* is of particular significance here. On one level the scene is a joke about Malraux's policy of bringing culture to the people (the caption itself contains a play on the word '*action*', in the cinematic and political senses): the Mozart piano sonata performed on a grand piano in a farmyard to an audience mostly of tractors, incurious labourers and impassive peasant women. But it is also Godard's personal farewell to the European cultural tradition. The scene is given an ironic formal elegance and symmetry corresponding to form in classical music. The take consists of the camera circling the farmyard three times, twice in one direction, the third time in the reverse. The first two circuits are timed to correspond exactly with the pianist's two playings of the first movement exposition; during the third the classical symmetry is confirmed by having the labourer whose exit towards a barn was followed in the first camera circuit, exactly reverse the movement, paralleling the reversed camera-track. Thus Godard isolates the scene formally from the rest of the film. The thrice-repeated circuit of the farmyard conveys a sense of enclosure, insisting on the total irrelevance of the Mozart performance—and the Mozartian sensibility—to the world of pile-ups and general disintegration outside. The pianist's enthusiastic dissertations on the music recall very strikingly the Shakespeare lesson in *Bande à Part*: here, the sense of incongruity and dislocation is even more extreme. (It is interesting that both Godard and Bergman, at almost the same time, should have used Mozart to stress, in the words of Max von Sydow, the 'utter unimportance of art in the world of men').

In *Viridiana*, Mozart and Handel gave place to raucous pop music ('Shake your cares away'); in *Weekend* Mozart gives place to the hippy-guerrillas' drum improvisations. The spirit could scarcely be more different. Buñuel gives us quite simply the end: there is no sense of any possible sequel or recommencement. What makes *Weekend* so much more insupportable is Godard's refusal to see the end of civilisation as final. It is insidiously flattering to the liberal-humanist ego to be able to equate the end of western civilisation with the end of the world. But *Weekend* is not about the end of the world—it is simply about the end of *our* world. Just to dare to imagine *Weekend* is an act of heroism of a kind only possible to an artist who has achieved an exceptional degree of personal freedom. The film postulates, rather convincingly, the irrelevance, uselessness, and ultimate disintegration of everything I have always believed in, worked for, and found worth living for, and I don't think I can be unique or even unusual in this. Hence my difficulty in tolerating the rather complacent, only *half*-shocked amusement with which many people receive it. (Yet Godard is partly responsible for this: jokes of the 'Arizona Jules' variety may be necessary if the film is to be supportable at all, yet at the same time they encourage a response of complacent spot-the-allusion smartness.) *Weekend* must be taken very seriously indeed, its implications and attitudes subjected to the most rigorous

Photograph: Godard directing Jean Yanne as the husband in Weekend.

scrutiny.

Weekend pushes to logical extremes just about everything present in Godard's previous work. All his feelings about capitalist society (whose representatives in earlier films range from the party guests in *Pierrot le Fou* to the inhabitants of the wasteland of *Les Carabiniers*) reach definitive expression in his depiction of the relationships and values of the characters of *Weekend*. Offered the fulfilment of their desires, the 'educated' bourgeois couple, like the semi-literates of *Les Carabiniers*, can think only of the basely material—hotels at Miami Beach and week-ends with James Bond. Sexual experience, driven for kicks to the weirdest perversions, has become a matter of farcical inanity and discomfort. Relationships resemble a grotesque parody of those in earlier Godard films: each partner has been trying for some time to murder the other; as the wife is raped in a ditch by a passing tramp, not only does the husband (who refused the tramp a light for his cigarette) show not the slightest indignation or interest—it doesn't even occur to the wife to rebuke him afterwards. At the end of the film she enjoys eating him, not in any spirit of symbolic possessiveness but simply as a tasty bit of meat. Godard shows us a world that is disintegrating primarily from its own perverted viciousness and debasement. This is acceptable as a savagely caricatured depiction of the essential nature of materialistic society; yet it is worth remembering—naïve as this may sound—that that society consists of millions of human beings, corrupted doubtless by materialism to a greater or lesser degree, but that 'greater or lesser' allows for a wide range of human possibilities. The simplification makes it that much easier for Godard to accept the necessity for (as well as the inevitability of) total ruthlessness.

Godard uses the 'Third World' monologues of the Algerian and the black African as a focal point for the film, punctuating them with flash-backs to earlier scenes (but generally using either alternative takes or continuations not shown before) and one flash-forward to the guerrillas. The monologues stress the necessity for violence and ruthlessness among the emergent peoples, and the formal device relates this to all the other parts of the film, giving it a more generalised significance, placing it in the context of western civilisation and its disintegration. The hippy-guerrilla-cannibals emerge as, at once, the logical outcome of what has gone before and the possibility of a new beginning. The latter is present in the film only tentatively: it is difficult to feel the guerrillas as other than completely negative, but not quite impossible. They represent the kind of reaction the society we have been shown *must* produce: dehumanised (from the viewpoint of any civilised concept of humanity), brutish, almost devoid of any generous, outgoing feelings towards other human beings (a characteristic they share with virtually all Godard's characters). In the scene in which they are introduced, they massacre a party of bourgeois picnickers, including presumably a

child (we just see the machine-gunning, with the victims off-screen, which could be seen as distanciation or simply cheating, depending on how sympathetic one is feeling towards Godard). The recurrent image of one or other of the guerrillas improvising in solitary self-absorption on a percussion battery seems central to the presentation: percussion (of such wide significance in the development of contemporary music) has itself a dehumanized quality, representing a stripping away of all *emotional* sensitivity to a purely nervous-physical level of experience. The cannibalistic 'rites' (if that is what they are) with eggs and live fish are a fulfilment of the heroine's fantasy (if that is what it was) at the start of the film; but deprived even of the debased eroticism that was its *raison d'être*. Nor is this replaced—as some have suggested—by a sense of tribal ritual: the action is presented as entirely arbitrary and meaningless, without the least communal significance. (It is difficult to feel sure to what degree the disgust the scene in question evokes is occasioned by its actual content and to what degree by our sense that Godard finds it amusing.) There is absolutely no sense of any constructive aim or programme.

But if the guerrillas seem in most obvious ways an end rather than a beginning, there is nevertheless a strong sense that something new might grow out of them; yet it would be something that left out of account virtually everything most of us value in the civilised tradition, in terms of sensibility as well as of achievement. The guerrillas supply the film's one moment of transitory tenderness, in the moment after the gun-battle when a girl dies singing, in a young man's arms. He goes off at once with another girl. But even the meagre fact that he props her up until she is dead counts for something in the context of human behaviour depicted in the rest of the film; and the spirit behind the apparent callousness is quite different—given the precariousness of their existence, the guerrillas are living by the code they have to live by. Their position is founded on a terrible honesty, quite without illusions or ideals, an acceptance of man's innate bestiality. There is a clear contrast between the recitation over drum music by the lake and the diatribe of Saint-Just in the meadows: the impassioned protest of the earlier speech gives place to an acceptance of the horror of man, and it is on precisely this note that the film ends: the guerrilla talking about the bottomless appallingness of human nature as he and the heroine pick at a mélange of pork, English tourist, and bits of her husband. Hence the end-caption, '*Fin de Cinéma*' (for '*Cinéma*' read '*the Arts*'): if the future *Weekend* postulates, with its disturbing balance of horror and hopefulness, comes about, it will entail the final destruction of all those finer human feelings that the European cultural tradition (in *Weekend*, Mozart) embodies.

I think one can draw a revealing comparison between *Weekend* and another great film about social disintegration, *The Chase*. Penn's film, it will be seen at once, has all those human qualities that Godard's lacks: a sense of the possibility of mature, adult relationship (Brando and Angie Dickinson), and of the possibility of tenderness and warmth of sympathetic response between people (Jane Fonda—Robert Redford—James Fox), and an ability to see human beings, even largely contemptible ones, in the round, with a certain generosity. Yet it is possession of these qualities that makes it impossible for him to present other than a tragic and despairing view of life, whereas it is precisely Godard's lack of them that enables him to go beyond this. It makes *Weekend* the most challenging film I have ever seen: the challenge lying in its horrifying optimism.

LE GAI SAVOIR

Ian Cameron

In a television studio at night, Patricia (Juliette Berto) and Emile (Jean-Pierre Léaud) embark on a course of study. The first year they collect images and sounds; the second year, they criticise, break down and recompose this material; the third year they build two or three models of sound and image.

Quite early in *Le Gai Savoir*, while the audience is still awake, the following dialogue exchange occurs between Patricia, daughter of Lumumba and the Cultural Revolution, and Emile, great great grandson of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, about the method they are to follow in their studies:

EMILE: *On va repartir à zéro.*

PATRICIA: *Non, avant de repartir, il faut y aller. On va retourner à zéro.* And slightly later she says '*on va dissoudre les images et les sons.*'

This dissolution is a process which has run through Godard's work: a breaking up of the ingredients of the 'well-made' movie—a process which has taken him to the zero of *Le Gai Savoir*, a zero which was, in a way, foreshadowed by the '*Fin du Cinéma*' end title of *Weekend*. If *Weekend* represented survival through the zero of civilisation's total breakdown, *Le Gai Savoir* is an attempt at a new beginning, a step towards a Great Leap Forward. But to reach his zero—perhaps the only destination open to him after the stylistic stalemate of *Weekend*—he has first to divest himself of the last remnants of the reactionary cinema. *Weekend* had both a plot and characters; it was also made for showing in cinemas—joints which Godard must now find distastefully bourgeois. It was in the last analysis made within the capitalist power structure of the film industry, which Godard escaped in *Le Gai Savoir* thanks to the solidly Gaullist O.R.T.F. That organisation later reacted by first censoring and then withholding the film, and it's still the only picture I've seen in which there's more in the English subtitles than there is on the soundtrack where bleeps cover the anti-official obscenities.

The whole breaking-down process has been the logical outcome of a decision which crept up on Godard somewhere around *Pierrot le fou* but could have been seen approaching through all its predecessors: it was there in embryo even in *Breathless* with its abandonment of conventional, 'grammatical' editing. Godard has grown to believe that the cinema's qualities as an illusion are not a sufficient reason for pretending (or a sufficient excuse for leaving the audience to believe) that what is on the screen is reality. This very pretence, though, could be the most valuable, even the unique and justifying quality of the cinema, distinguishing it from, say, the lantern lecture. Once the pretence is rejected, the cinema moves out of the area of straight or modified naturalism into preserves akin to those embraced by the revolutionary end of the theatre. Godard's attitude is spelled out in *Le Gai Savoir* in Emile's 'I added that it's necessary to be very careful not to fall into the ideology of truth to life, a trap not always avoided by film-makers as important as Dreyer, Bresson, Antonioni, Bergman.'

Instead of a plot there is, once it has been decided upon, the structure of the educational curriculum, a structure which inevitably is

modified and interrupted as it goes along. And whatever you may call Patricia and Emile, they are certainly not characters—they have no real life outside the argument in which they are involved. So who—or rather what—are Patricia and Emile? They are Maoists investigating film-making, film-makers investigating Maoism; they are both actors and audience, makers of the film and part of the film that is made; above all they are Godard. Their two voices share in short shifts what amounts to a monologue. They may chide each other for being late or lacking in enthusiasm, but they do so only to the extent that someone might feel dissatisfaction with himself. They are like the pairs of narrators who are a commonplace of French documentaries and radio programmes—except that they change over often in mid-sentence, and sometimes they say different things at the same time. But then it's a Godard movie.

In a way *Le Gai Savoir* is the *Made in USA* of his later work, a deeply personal, largely incoherent mess which nevertheless is an index of his position at the time of its making. In *Made in USA*, Anna Karina, the camera's love object in the earlier films, completed her mutation into Lemmy Caution and finally knocked the feeling—at least on an emotionally communicable level—out of Godard. *Le Gai Savoir* is again a staging-point in Godard's development. It marks his overt acceptance of the doctrines of Chairman Mao. At the time when it appeared, *La Chinoise* seemed to be critical of its youthful Maoists and their attempts to propagate their private revolution; only later has this aspect of the film been submerged by its prophetic qualities. After the limbo of *Weekend*, we now have Emile saying to Patricia about their planned three years of study: '*Ma pratique ne sera pas aveugle puisque tu l'auras l'éclairée par ta théorie révolutionnaire.*' And later the radio (another Godard mouthpiece, not at all like the O.R.T.F.) says: '*Réformons notre étude: seul le petit livre rouge peut nous donner les moyens d'étudier en véritables marxistes léninistes la pensée du Président Mao.*' Lying expressionlessly on the printed page, these last words might seem like a send-up; in context, spoken with little more expression, they are devoid of cod connotations.

So we start off with our two non-characters against a blank black zero background. At intervals during the film, they get up and go, saying that it's almost dawn, and after a few daytime street shots of traffic and passers-by accompanied by snatches of revolutionary song, they are back, and one grumbles about the other's lateness (usually Patricia about Emile's —she is perceptibly the keener and tougher of the two). The framework might seem vaguely realistic, even if we do get through each 'year' in a very few evenings. But we are reminded from the start that nothing is to be taken literally. Patricia arrives carrying a transparent plastic umbrella. '*C'est un parapluie anti atomique?*' asks Emile and she replies '*Oui, mais je m'en sers comme réflecteur de conscience.*' Furthermore we learn from Emile '*Elle était déléguée du tiers monde aux nouvelles usines Citroën dans l'Atlantique Nord.*' Emile is a student whose course was full and who was kept out of the faculty by the parachutists; his daytime plans include going with Bernardo to chuck grenades into the biggest cinema in Rome to punish Italian audiences who refuse to have their films in original (i.e. not dubbed) versions: 'since the invention of the talkies, they have never seen a "talking" picture. It's unbelievable, terrifying—to prefer slave sound to free sound!'

The reasons for the study are explained in a ping-pong duologue that is worth quoting in full as being representative of the film at its clearest:

EMILE: *Un spectre hante le monde,*
PATRICIA: *le spectre du communisme.*
EMILE: *Toutes les puissances du vieil occident*

se sont unies pour traquer ce spectre.
PATRICIA: *Johnson et le Figaro*
EMILE: *Les radicaux d'Espagne et les policiers d'Indonésie*
PATRICIA: *La Rand Corporation et Pompidou*
EMILE: *Il est grand temps que les communistes exposent*
PATRICIA: *à la face du monde entier*
EMILE: *leurs conceptions, leurs buts et leurs tendances*
PATRICIA: *dans une situation historique donnée*
EMILE: *il peut y avoir mille manières de parler de la Révolution*
PATRICIA: *mais il y a une concordance nécessaire entre ceux qui sont décidés à la faire.*

For Godard as an intellectual revolutionary, the method of working is of paramount importance, for, as the radio says, '*un style de travail erroné est l'expression d'une politique erronée. Appliquer un style de travail bourgeois à l'étude de la pensée de Mao est appliquer une politique bourgeoise.*' Lightly disguised, it's our old friend form-and-content again. Even the setting-out of the method is conditioned by political propriety:
EMILE: *Dans une image il faut essayer de découvrir une méthode.*
PATRICIA: *Oui, oui. Il faut trouver le discours de sa méthode et le nôtre en même temps.*
EMILE: *Ah! oui, mais alors il faudra pas oublier de s'autocritiquer après.*
PATRICIA: *Et cette méthode si on la trouve nous conduira à des voies de fabrication.*
EMILE: *à des points de repère en tous cas.*

The aims of the study have been put forward earlier in a passage so fragmented and repeated that its importance is heavily underlined—within the film's aggressive monotone, repetition is used for emphasis. Straightened out, the section says '*Il n'y a qu'à rechercher la vérité dans les faits. C'est les choses et les phénomènes tels qu'ils existent objectivement.* (Multiple repetitions in the last sentence.) *Alors c'est ce qu'on a dit: la vérité c'est le lien interne de ces choses et phénomènes, c'est-à-dire les lois qui les régissent.*' Without this, no television and no real cinema is possible.

At the mention of television there is an interjection describing French television as '*publicitaire et fasciste*'. The film is not just an investigation of audio-visual means according to the tenets of Maoism, but is conditioned by the outside world—the soundtrack in particular contains all manner of echoes from the events of May 1968 when it was being edited. It assumes the ultimate impossibility of detachment from the struggle. We hear from the radio that '*il n'y a pas de science neutre*' and that '*les savants ont collaboré avec Hitler, Johnson, Staline, de Gaulle*'—the grouping of names is a typical one. Apart from the current events references and those to politics on a global scale, there are more detailed ones to education and the mass media in France. There's a lot on the O.R.T.F.: the appearance of the word '*office*' in its title suggests to Emile that it's staffed entirely by office flunkeys, and its subservience to the regime is repeatedly stated with various degrees of obscenity, references which are usually censored from the soundtrack. There is a quote from a ministerial document about education: '*l'école traduira les rapports de la société en organisant la formation longue et abstraite des enfants destinés essentiellement par leur origine familiale à occuper les plus hauts postes de direction et d'administration de la Société. Ensuite, par une formation plus courte et plus simplifiée, à l'usage des enfants d'ouvriers et de paysans dont l'entrée dans le monde de la profession parait n'exiger qu'une formation limitée.*' The use of education as a weapon by the government to maintain the existing *status quo* is also dealt with slightly earlier in year two through selections from an alphabet book distributed by the Gaullist government in infant schools: '*Par exemple, lettre M. Il y a là*

le mot meilleur et ce mode d'emploi: la brioche est meilleure que la pain. La preuve est faite que de Gaulle et Pompidou parlent aux ouvriers de '68 comme Marie-Antoinette à ceux de '89.' Godard's investigation is conducted in the light of the existing (hostile) power structure being in total control both of education and of the means of mass communication.

Still: Emile and Patricia.

The results of the investigation, however, are less interesting than its premises; partly they are in that old Godardian preserve of word games. One statement, though, is worth noting. It comes after the *recherches sonores* on the difficulties of recreating and transmitting the precise sounds of particular tones of voice and the experiments in saying '*Oh ! oui.*' in the way Anne had said it when Michel said '*On va faire les cons au Pentagone.*' If one cannot remake

this sound, it is because one doesn't yet know very well what it is made of. It's because the image mixes so intimately with the sound of which it's the image that it ends up by usurping the principal role. And Patricia adds that the eye must listen before it looks.

Here, evidently is a key statement which sums up a position towards which Godard has been steadily moving. It is detectable already at the beginning of the film in a speech by Patricia about her aim: '*moi, moi apprendre leur apprendre et à moi à retourner contre l'ennemi l'arme avec laquelle dans le fond des choses il nous attaque: le langage.*' In *Le Gai Savoir*, the image certainly doesn't usurp the principal role; Godard attacks with language. For most of the film, the only image is of the couple sitting against a totally black background; for some of it, the screen is devoid of any picture. There is little more until the desultory film models in the last third, apart from the street shots between sections, hand-written scrawls on Playboy photographs and the like, and two sequences in which the other two people in the film appear in held close-up. A child and an old tramp, they are both outside the linguistic catchment area of Godard's thought and contribute disruptive thoughts in the form of free association exercises (*torture/tortue*; *caresse/carré*; *chinois/comprends pas*). The absence of the audio-visual interrelationship that has always been accepted as the essential of the talkies of course means that any attempted analysis of the film must concentrate on the dialogue. Godard, who produced the under-statement of the year when he said in Jonathan Cott's 'Rolling Stone' interview, 'I'm over the movie marijuana magic thing', has Patricia deliver his up-dating of the Bresson statement that '*le cinéma n'est pas un spectacle, c'est une écriture*'. She says, '*pas représentation, présentation; pas spectacle, lutte.*'

Godard's struggle in *Le Gai Savoir* has produced a very thin result, and its thinness can be attributed to his uniquely privileged position in the professional cinema. His services are still so much in demand that he can have the luxury of doing his thinking on film, an for him this means virtually living his life film, which he has done with an often hea rending deadpan. *Le Gai Savoir* is quite overt a piece of work in progress, an assemblage o ephemera churned out by the industry of his mind, and there is nothing finished about it. It is both a clearing of the decks to remove the formal impedimenta of the sort of cinema he has rejected and some first tentative steps towards a new mode of operation. The conclusion or rather the inconclusiveness is of no great importance. Emile and Patricia reach a definition of '*le mélange de méthode avec sentiment*' for their images and sounds, which doesn't take us very far:

PATRICIA: *C'est un peu le néant quand-même qu'on a découvert, non?*

EMILE: *Autrement dit, c'est un échec ce film.*

Well, not quite a failure because the radio comes up with a conclusion, or rather a final slogan, that '*la connaissance sera contrôlée par l'imagination représentant la conscience de classe*'. And Emile joins in with '*Quel meilleur idéal proposer aux hommes d'aujourd'hui, qui soit au-dessus et au-delà d'eux-mêmes sinon la reconquête par la connaissance du néant qu'ils ont eux-mêmes découvert.*' They say goodbye to each other in their real names of Juliette and Jean-Pierre and the radio (or voice off) comes up with a final statement: 'This film has not wished to, cannot wish to explain the cinema, nor even to become the goal it seeks, but more modestly to offer a few effective methods for reaching it. This film is not the film which must be made but shows how, if one has a film to make, one must necessarily travel some of the paths we have travelled here.'

Just before the end of the film, Patricia/Juliette regrets that they have to stop as the

Stills: Le Gai Savoir.

O.R.T.F. needs the studio and they still haven't done half the shots. But these bits, says Emile/Jean-Pierre, will be shot by Bertolucci in Rome, by Straub in Germany, by Glauber Rocha in Brazil or by someone else.

PATRICIA: *Il les font, il les font pour qui?*

EMILE: *Ben, il les font, il les font pour le peuple.*

In this context for the people evidently means on behalf of the people rather than directed at the people. There has usually been a gap between hard-core revolutionary cinema and mass cinema. *Le Gai Savoir* takes the contradiction to an extreme with its lack of plot, characters, backgrounds, even to a large extent of visuals. All that remains is an often aridly intellectual discussion. With this and the confusions sown by Godard's often disruptive treatment, one is forced to the conclusion that the film is a notebook for Godard and not something made for an audience. The sheer weight of polyphonic verbiage defeats concentration and even the will to concentrate. You start watching (or rather listening) with the sharpened wits needed in Godard movies and end up in a defeated haze.

Le Gai Savoir shows Godard having abandoned all the old tyrannies (or just conventions) of the pre-revolutionary cinema. He is casting around for new forms to replace the old and failing to come up with them. Yet he is a compulsive film-maker—he can't give up while the opportunities for film-making are there. Hence the verbiage. Hence, too, the impression strongest in *One Plus One*, that Godard is frightened both by his material and by not being in control of where he is going. In *One Plus One*, he seems afraid to let anyone say anything. No-one except the black power leader being interviewed is allowed to speak for himself. The fact that the other participants read from set texts could indicate, for instance, the dangers of revolutionary conformism. But then there is the interview with Anne Wiazemsky who unlike any previous Godard interviewees is not allowed to have her say. She is restricted to yes or no replies to questions which are such as to make the answers almost irrelevant.

When Godard's concern with young people began in *Masculin-Féminin*, it was conditioned by the generation gap and by his admitted inability to understand them. By *Le Gai Savoir* he has become one of them—he has entered a second adolescence and become the victim of all adolescence's confusions and fears.

ONE PLUS ONE

Raymond Durgnat

The Rolling Stones record a number. Intercut with their rehearsals are scenes in which those involved in various forms of rebellion, both left and right wing, read texts or are interviewed about their beliefs.

Jean-Luc Godard meets Swinging London; the conjunction was too auspicious not to be ominous. Not that it was impossible to imagine the two surrogate-realities dovetailing. On both sides the equivocations are apparent. Godard's realism evokes the medieval scholastic doctrine of Realism (which corresponds to what we would call idealism) as opposed to nominalism (corresponding to our realism). His eye, alighting on reality, *abstracts*, however 'realistic' the idioms he employs. The visually concrete world separates out into symbolic-iconic-tactile-auditory aspects (or 'accidents'). Where a conventional, 'nominalist' director seeks to recreate, in a coherent whole, all he can sense of the diverse aspects of reality, from its surface to its meaning (meaning being the moral-dramatic values which constitute their 'holding centre', that is, their humanist, non-alienated 'essence'), Godard lets the accidents float off one another (why shouldn't a face be blue? . . .), and concentrates, obsessively, on the deep absence of any meaning.

His London is a Nowhere Land—and fleet references to that Yellow Submarine (of nostalgia for togetherness) prompts the comparison with the Beatles' Nowhere Man, a lonely, bookish, madly, sadly, creative polymath. *Cinéma-vérité* of a Stones rehearsal (always the same song) is interspersed with 1) a sprinkling of shots of youngsters scrawling graffiti on walls, posters and cars, and 2) several longer episodes. Black Panthers sit around and read and talk in a car scrapyard, then shoot two white women in white shifts. A TV team interview Anne Wiazemsky in a cool green forest and feed her complex Marcuse-like propositions to which she replies 'No' or 'Yes'. Two somewhat sceptical coloured girl reporters interview a determined but somewhat bemused Black Panther. Maoist slogans and Hitler salutes are exchanged in a bookshop (not necessarily, as some critics have supposed, a dirty Soho one), run by a hippie reading aloud from, *inter alia*, '*Mein Kampf*'. Finally a film is being shot on a beach. Coloured guerillas on the run try to help a white girl escape, then lay her on a huge camera boom which lifts her corpse, in some art-as-Elijah's-chariot apotheosis, up towards the sun. The image freezes (despite a continuing slow track-in) and—courtesy of the producers—is printed in a sequence of granular rainbow colours. With such perplexing juxtapositions goes the cut-up technique. Over various images (and faded-out dialogues) a voice reads from various, possibly apocryphal, texts. Predominant among them is a porno-political spy thriller whose characters, like *Alphaville's*, have realistic-Surrealist names and aliases. A certain Marilyn gets involved with Trotskyites, a Governor of the B.B.C. lands his Starfighter in Biafra. The ideological *volte-faces* characteristic of our post-cold-war era (and of its unprecedentedly long historical awareness) suggests such pirouettes as: 'You're my kind of girl, Pepita', said Pope Paul, as he lay down in the

grass, 'But I'm not going to rape you.' The clash of behavioural conventions is a happy one.

Godard's ideological evolution requires some comment. *Alphaville* seemed to affirm a nostalgia for good old-fashioned individualistic violence, as against the dehumanising machines. Since the events of May 1968, Godard has increasingly committed himself to a radical-anarchist left, to the Third World, to his variant of 'International Situationism'. *Le Petit Soldat* has signed on, after all, with Che; and Godard observes his redemption, with more hopefulness, but with a nagging scepticism . . .

His evolution from a nihilistic acquiescence, which could hardly have brought itself to object to Fascism, to these revolutionary affirmations, and indeed actions, parallels a general shift, from the apoliticism of the New Wave's peak years, as de Gaulle triumphed over an aggressive extreme right, to the radical activism of the Provos, Cohn-Bendit, Marcuse, 'Black Dwarf', *et al.* But just as the students were infinitely less menacing than the General's plot, so the tensions between radical revolutionism and a

Still: The Rolling Stones – One Plus One.

despairing withdrawal from society are weaker. They are weaker because revolution is less real a possibility than acquiescence in what the radicals would describe as the ongoing Liberal Fascism. *One Plus One* is about revolution *as* paralysis.

Godard's Black Panther guerillas, real in the Congo, real in the USA, are purely hypothetical in London 1969. Their rootless pathos is the effect desired. The Marcusian interview is set in a forest recalling a menthol-fresh commercial (Godard's wife appears as a kind of visual-dramatic surrogate for Mick Jagger's Marianne Faithfull, whom Godard used in *Made in USA*. The director's wife for the star's, the French girl in the English film, the English girl in the American film . . .). *One Plus One* is an audio-visual meditation on the remoteness of radical action, on the curious ethereality, betrayed by vehemence, in radical thought. Are some Maoists *also* Fascists, an efflorescence of Western decadence? Who is really who and how many sides is he on?

In the gloss and polish of a recording studio, Mick Jagger sings: 'Please let me introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth of taste; I was there when Jesus Christ had his moment of doubt and pain; I made damn sure that Pilate washed his hands and sealed his fate.' In St. Petersburg, 1918, the same enigmatic character 'rode a tank with a sergeant's rank': 'It's so confusing, it's just the nature of my game.' Is he the devil? (the British title of the film is *Sympathy for the Devil*). Or our friend Judas? Or the relentless egoism which, like Steiger's merchant-turned-Commissar in *Dr Zhivago*, always chooses the winning side, just in time? Which earns the old order's royalties while promulgating the revolutionary dream? The contradictions find their likeable, respectworthy, ineffectual compromise in the form of free concerts and fund raising for Oxfam—a compromise no more ineffectual than the fore-doomed gestures of extremism . . .

The dearth of inspiration all too evident in *One Plus One* is linked, no doubt, with this spiritual rarefaction. *Le Petit Soldat* is a nasty, and real, masterpiece. Here the pole of subversive possibility is too distant, too hypothetical, to offer real possibility of betrayal. And Godard is an emotional thinker. Agile as his mind is, it responds to his heart, rather than leading it. One might tend to blame the wordplay's weak, strained quality on Godard's difficulties with English, but the equal and opposite verbal forcedness of *Le Gai Savoir* suggests otherwise. Here, graffiti scrawls include: Stalin-Hilton, Mao-Art, Freudemocracy, Sovietcong, FBI + CIA = TWA + PANAM (The last isn't so ill-aimed; America's coca-colonisation of England and the world couldn't be more clearly proclaimed than by such commercials as 'The *international passport* to smoking pleasure' or '— means friendship in *any language*.').

Because inertia is its topic, it's no accident that the stylistic conception of *One Plus One* recalls Warhol. Godard planned the film as 'eight ten-minute takes . . . or possibly ten eight-minute ones'. Both the determined formalism, and the nonchalance of the alternatives, recall Warhol's dry irony. The camera pans slowly, often, it seems, aimlessly, from side to side, preferring, in the *cinéma-vérité* rehearsal sequence, to miss any spontaneously developing interest, rather than seem to hurry to catch it. The film's air of bored emptiness—less conspicuous, less insolent, less easy to like, and, for these reasons only, less stimulating than Warhol's—is nonetheless of a similar order. Over it the commentary superimposes a deluge of verbal concepts, so hypothetical as to be meaningless (it can, after all, be argued that the very processes of thought, memory and hypothesis are schizophrenic—thought involving a 'trace' of emotion broken away from the experience and manipulated and criss-crossed

Still: black guerrilla, white girls.

on the mind's equivalent of non-amplified playback). Sometimes, here, the verbal porno-politics are accompanied by visuals which, though at first implying reality (as visuals conventionally do), soon seem problematical (like the Nazi hippies). Symbolic, no doubt, but in a curious way—suggestive of hallucinations, of images which the mind is striving to see as real, just as the revolutionaries' thoughts are striving to make revolution real. With race war now encircling the globe, from Detroit to Malaya, theory has it that black guerillas should be shooting white women in London now, amidst Jancsoesque calm and submissiveness. Again, theory imposes itself on reality, via kitch realism (the TV interview, with nature imitating, not art, but commercial art), while commonsense (the girl reporters) out of respect, politeness and sympathy, refrain from breaking down the faith which seems necessary to self-respect. The faith in revolution, in the brotherhood of the black race, there, is as noble and forlorn as Michel's moralistic little parable, to Patricia, about fidelity-in-crime in Breathless

Deploying all the impedimenta of communication (from books through tape-recorders to a-camera-before-the-cameras) the film isn't about communication at all, but about conviction, and about repetition as a means thereto. No-one speaks: everyone reads. The Rolling Stones sequences cover one recording after another of the same number, which the Group perform in (fascinatingly) different styles. One Black Panther reads passages from a book which another reads back into a tape recorder. An iron (or safety) curtain of theory has dropped across the world's stage. Life is reduced to footnotes about the theory of life's possibility. The slow bored camera's eye evokes Hal's slow, patronising voice, in *2001*, praising the spaceman's

Still: Anne Wiazemsky is interviewed.

lifelike, but stilted, drawing, which is all the astronaut retains of creativity. Godard, here, is the astronaut—astronaught!—of inner space; not the inner space of the hippies (LSD, macrobiotics, whole-body orgasms) but something older-fashioned, less libidinal, more rationalist: the inner space of a stream of consciousness lacking faith either in emotional drive or in objective correlatives. Consciousness has no aim nor sanction other than a pessimistic idealism, weak as a whim, as soon betrayed as uttered.

A lonely deadness is built into the old order also. The pop group is separated, by sound baffles and head-phones, into the negation of a group: individuals scattered about a labyrinth. Isolated, their pianist plays much like any concert pianist. Little, here, of the Stones' on-stage ecstasies, although, at long long last, Jagger jiggers himself into a private, musical high (celebrating treachery—and celebrating it ironically—so like Godard's double negations), which is like an obstinate, violent flicker of irreducible life, persisting in the Alphaville we call London.

Amidst the intersecting fantasies of politics, art, commitment and being, the final values are thuggery (in *Alphaville*), wistfulness (the scrawler of graffiti—usually Wiazemsky/Faithfull) and treachery (*Pierrot*); the first a nostalgia, the second uninspired, the third equivocally treacherous and foredoomed.

Just as Bosch shows humans conjoined with, or transmogrifying into, constructions, contraptions, vegetables, animals, demons and other monstrosities, so here Godard's wife, interviewed, as was la Faithfull, by TV, all but becomes a symbiosis of herself with adman imagery and political abstraction (she separates herself by a certain muteness, and mystery . . .).

She knows her Christian name: not Ophelia, not 'Cordilla', but Eve; born Budapest; surname, Democracy. These remarks, disguised as interview questions, and imposed on their subject, evoke the Marcusian line which Godard seems to regard with suspicious longing:
'On LSD you begin to die a little? . . . Maybe the devil is God in exile? . . . There is only one way to be an intellectual revolutionary and that is to give up being an intellectual? . . . Orgasm is the only moment when you can't cheat life? . . . The Occident is fighting Communism because it is Faustian? . . . When the novel is dead, then the technological society will be fully upon us? . . . '

She assents but the remarks are no more her life than the menthol-smart greenery. A similar scepticism underlies, no doubt, the shots of graffiti scrawled on, of all places, pop-coloured cars . . . The incomplete lettering, and the interposed body of the scrawler, conceal the full text until the last moment, creating a riddle-suspense, concluding in anticlimax. Political names are used like brand names, or in poetico-schizoid conjuration, or like such Burrovian entities as the Nova Police and the Heavy Metal Kid.

All in all, the film is, in about equal proportions, boring in an unstimulating way, boring in a stimulating way, and heavily poignant with numb lost pain. That it marks a moment—or even period—of creative sterility need not be contested. Yet, as one who remained relatively unmoved by the proliferating intellectual notations (too often marginal details) of Godard's most-favoured, mid-period movies, I find this no poorer for being barer; indeed, being monolithic, it is, to me, more moving. One may regret that Godard has recreated, rather than investigated, the curious blankness behind so much talk of revolution now. Yet it's the indispensible complementary movie to the hairy muddle of *If* . . . (Put those two movies together and a real complexity begins to emerge . . .)

The swing in critical attitude to Godard is disquieting, however. It used to be necessary to emphasise that the Godard cult liked Godard movies for all the complacent reasons, that is to say, as a cleverly styled mirror of contemporary negations and apathies, rather than for their element of disturbed inquiry into them. It was necessary to accuse Godard the stylist, in order to demystify Godard the sage, to expose in Godard the honest artist experiencing all the ravages of alienation, more honestly than most (which is not to say sufficiently honestly for him to qualify as a great artist, except possibly in *Le Petit Soldat*). It is equally necessary now to defend Godard, in artistic difficulty, in something like psycho-spiritual crisis, against a sudden shift to smooth sneers. In the changed tone there seems often more animus than strictly aesthetic considerations would warrant. Godard has, after all, committed the cardinal sin of incommoding the British Film Institute.

What he is doing in a film whose weakness and vulnerability are misleadingly obvious, is not easy to understand. Jagger remarked, 'He was such a fucking twot, but we didn't want to spoil his ego-scene', among equally uncomplimentary remarks about others involved. The remark is too open to be malevolent, and so insolent one would love to agree with it. But if one accepts, on the one hand, *Une Femme Mariée*, and, on the other hand, Warhol's *Harlot*, it is not so easy to dismiss this curious compromise between their aesthetic processes of *belles-lettres* and cut-up, of verbal dexterity and visual nullity, of mannerist subversion of apparent aims. *One Plus One* is an underground movie; as sullen, as uneven, as superficial, as underground movies are, yet also as abruptly beautiful, just as the film's elongated, etiolated architectonics converge on the apotheoses of Jagger and Wiazemsky.

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1950: Acted in *Quadrille* (short). Directed by Jacques Rivette.

1950: Founded 'Gazette du Cinéma' with Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer and contributed, sometimes under the pseudonym Hans Lucas, until 1952. Five issues of the magazine published. Then wrote regularly for 'Cahiers du Cinéma' and 'Arts' until 1959.

1951: Acted in *Presentation, ou Charlotte et son Steack* (short). Directed by Eric Rohmer.

1954: OPERATION BETON
Directed, written and with commentary by Godard. Photographed by Adrian Porchet. 20 minutes.

1955: UNE FEMME COQUETTE
Directed, written and photographed by Godard (as Hans Lucas). From Maupassant. With Marie Lysandre, Roland Tolma. 10 minutes.

1956: Acted in *Le Coup du Berger*. Directed by Jacques Rivette.

1957: TOUS LES GARCONS S'APPELLENT PATRICK—*Charlotte et Véronique*
Directed by Godard. Produced by Films de la Pléiade (Pierre Braunberger). Written by Eric Rohmer. Photographed by Michel Latouche. Music by P. Monsigny. Edited by Cécile Decugis. With Jean-Claude Brialy (Patrick), Anne Colette (Charlotte), Nicole Berger (Véronique). 21 minutes.

1958: Appeared in *Paris Nous Appartient*. Directed by Jacques Rivette.

1958: UNE HISTOIRE D'EAU (short)
Directed by Godard and François Truffaut. Produced by Roger Fleytoux for Films de la Pléiade (Pierre Braunberger). Written by Francois Truffaut. Photographed by Michel Latouche. With Jean-Claude Brialy (*lui*), Caroline Dim (*elle*). 18 minutes. '*En hommage de Mac Sennett*'.

1959: CHARLOTTE ET SON JULES
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Films de la Pléiade (Pierre Braunberger). Photographed by Michel Latouche. Music by P. Monsigny. Edited by Cécile Decugis. With Jean-Paul Belmondo (Jean), Anne Colette (Charlotte), Gérard Blain (*le type*). Godard's voice dubbed for Belmondo. 20 minutes.

1959: Acted in *Le Signe du Lion*. Directed by Rohmer.

1959: A BOUT DE SOUFFLE—*Breathless*
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Georges de Beauregard. Story by François Truffaut. Photographed by Raoul Coutard. Technical Advisor: Claude Chabrol. Edited by Cécile Decugis. Music by Martial Solal. With Jean Seberg (Patricia Franchini), Jean-Paul Belmondo (Michel Poiccard), Henri-Jacques Huet (Berrouti), Jean-Pierre Melville (Parvulesco), Liliane David (Liliane), Daniel Boulanger (Inspector), Claude Mansart (Used Car Dealer), Van Doude (Journalist), Jean-Luc Godard (Informer), Roger Hanin. 89 minutes.

1960: LE PETIT SOLDAT—*The Little Soldier*
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Georges de Beauregard (de Beauregard/SNC). Music by Maurice Leroux. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. With Michel Subor (Bruno Forestier), Anna Karina (Véronica Dreyer), Henri-Jacques Huet (Jacques), Paul Beauvais (Paul), Laszlo Szabo (Laszlo). 88 minutes.

1961: UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME —*A Woman is a Woman*
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Georges de Beauregard/Carlo Ponti (Rome-Paris Films). Based on an outline by Godard from an idea by Geneviève Cluny (published in 'Cahiers du Cinéma' No. 98, August, 1959 and also used as the basis for *Les Yeux de l'Amour*, directed by Philippe de Broca.) Photographed in Franscope and Eastmancolor by Raoul Coutard. Music by Michel Legrand. Production designer: Bernard Evein. Edited by Agnès Guillemot and Lila Herman. With Anna Karina (Angela), Jean-Claude Brialy (Emile), Jean-Paul Belmondo (Alfred), Nicole Paquin (Suzanne), Marie Dubois, Marion Sarraut, Jeanne Moreau (herself). 85 minutes.

1961: LA PARESSE (Episode in LES SEPT PECHES CAPITAUX).
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Films Gibe-Franco London Films (Paris)—Titanus (Rome). Photographed by Henri Decaë. Edited by Jacques Gaillard. Music by Michel Legrand. With Eddie Constantine, Nicole Mirel (themselves). Other episodes directed by Claude Chabrol, Edouard Molinaro, Jacques Demy, Roger Vadim, Philippe de Broca, Sylvain Dhomme.

1962: VIVRE SA VIE
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Pierre Braunberger (Films de la Pléiade). Photographed by Raoul Coutard. Music by Michel Legrand. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. With Anna Karina (Nana), Sady Rebbot (Raoul), André S. Labarthe (Paul), Guylaine Schlumberger (Yvette), Brice Parain (Philosopher), Peter Kassowitz (Young man), Dimitri Dinett (Dimitri), Monique Messine (Elizabeth), Gérard Hoffman (Man who buys Nana), Gilles Quéant (Client), Paul Pavel (Journalist), Eric Schlumberger (Luigi), Marcel Charton (Policeman at typewriter), Giselle Hauchecorne (Concierge), Jacques Florency (Man in Cinema), Henry Atal (Arthur), Odile Geoffroy (Barmaid). 85 minutes.

1962: LE NOUVEAU MONDE—*Il Nuovo Mondo* (Episode in ROGOPAG)
Written and directed by Godard. Produced by Société Lyre Cinématographique, Paris-Arcofilm, Rome (Alfredo Bini). Photographed by Jean Rabier. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. Music: a Beethoven Quartet. With Alexandra Stewart, Jean-Marc Bory, Jean-André Fieschi, Michel Delahaye, the voice of André S. Labarthe. 20 minutes. Other episodes directed by Roberto Rossellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Ugo Gregoretti.

1962: Godard appeared with Anna Karina, Sami Frey and Jean-Claude Brialy in the film-within-a-film in Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7*.

1963: LES CARABINIERS—*The Soldiers*
Directed by Godard. Produced by Rome-Paris Films (Georges de Beauregard, Carlo Ponti), Les Films Marceau. Written by Godard, Roberto Rossellini, Jean Gruault, from a play by Benjamin Joppolo. Photographed by Raoul Coutard. Music by Philippe Arthuys. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. With Marino Masè (Ulysse), Albert Juross (Michel Ange), Geneviève Galea (Vénus), Catherine Ribeiro (Cléopatre), Gérard Poirot (1st Soldier), Jean Brassat (2nd Soldier), Alvaro Gheri (3rd Soldier), Barbet Schroeder (Car Salesman), Jean Gruault (Baby's Father), Jean-Louis Comolli (Soldier with Fish), Odile Geoffroy

(Girl Revolutionary), Catherine Durant ('la femme du monde'), Jean Monsigny, Gilbert Servien (Soldiers), Wladimir Faters (Revolutionary), Roger Coggio, Pascale Andret (Couple in Car).

1963: LE MEPRIS—*Il Disprezzo, Contempt, A Ghost At Noon*
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Rome-Paris Films (Carlo Ponti, Georges de Beauregard), Les Films Concordia, Paris—Compania Cinematografica Champion, Rome. From 'A Ghost at Noon' by Alberto Moravia. Photographed in Franscope and Technicolor by Raoul Coutard. Music by Georges Delerue. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. With Brigitte Bardot (Camille Javal), Jack Palance (Jeremiah Prokosh), Fritz Lang (Fritz Lang), Michel Piccoli (Paul Javal), Georgia Moll (Francesca Vanini), Jean-Luc Godard (Assistant Director). 100 minutes.

1963: LE GRAND ESCROC (Episode in LES PLUS BELLES ESCROQUERIES DU MONDE)
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Pierre Roustang for Ulysse Productions, LUX/CCF (Paris)—Vides Cinematografica (Rome)—Toho/Towa (Tokyo)—Caesar Film Productie (Amsterdam). Photographed by Raoul Coutard. Music by Michel Legrand. Edited by Agnès Guillemot, Leila Lakshmanan. With Jean Seberg (Patricia Leacock), Charles Denner (L'Escroc), Laszlo Szabo (The Inspector). 25 minutes. Other episodes directed by Claude Chabrol, Roman Polanski, Ugo Gregoretti, Hiromichi Horikawa.

1964: BANDE A PART—*The Outsiders, Band of Outsiders*
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Anouchka Films, Orsay Films (Production manager Philippe Dussart). From 'Fools' Gold' by Dolores Hitchens. Photographed by Raoul Coutard. Music by Michel Legrand. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. With Anna Karina (Odile), Claude Brasseur (Arthur), Sami Frey (Franz), Louisa Colpeyn (Mme. Victoria), Chantal Derget (English Teacher), Ernest Menzer, Danièle Givard, Michèle Seghers, Georges Staquet, Michel Delahaye. 95 minutes.

1964: UNE FEMME MARIEE
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Anouchka Films, Orsay Films (Production Manager Philippe Dussart). Photographed by Raoul Coutard. Music: Extracts from Beethoven Quartets 10, 7, 14, 9, 15. Jazz: Claude Nougaro. Song: Sylvie Vartan. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. With Macha Méril (Charlotte), Bernard Noel (Robert, the lover), Philippe Leroy (Pierre, the husband), Roger Leenhardt (himself), Rita Maiden (Mme. Céline), Margaret Le-Van, Véronique Duval (Girls at the Swimming Bath), Chris Tophe (Nicolas). 98 minutes.

1964: MONTPARNASSE ET LEVALLOIS (Episode in PARIS VU PAR . . .)
'Organisation' and script by Godard. Produced by Les Films du Losange (Barbet Schroeder). Filmed in 16mm. and colour (Ektachrome) by Albert Maysles. Based on the story told by Belmondo in *Une Femme est une Femme*. Edited by Jacqueline Raynal. With Johanna Shimkus (Monica), Philippe Hiquily (Ivan), Serge Davri (Roger). Other episodes directed by Claude Chabrol, Jean Douchet, Jean-Daniel Pollet, Eric Rohmer, Jean Rouch.

1965: ALPHAVILLE
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by André Michelin for Chaumiane (Paris)—Filmstudio (Rome). Photographed by Raoul Coutard. Music by Paul Misraki. Edited by

Agnès Guillemot. With Eddie Constantine (Lemmy Caution), Anna Karina (Natasha von Braun), Akim Tamiroff (Henri Dickson), Howard Vernon (Professor von Braun), Laszlo Szabo (The Engineer), Jean-André Fieschi, Jean-Louis Comolli (Professors Eckel and Jeckel), Michel Delahaye. 98 minutes.

1965: PIERROT LE FOU—*Crazy Pete*
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Rome-Paris Films (Georges de Beauregard)—Dino DeLaurentiis Cinematografica. From 'Obsession' by Lionel White. Photographed in Techniscope and Eastmancolor by Raoul Coutard. Music by Antoine Duhamel. Edited by Françoise Colin. With Jean-Paul Belmondo (Ferdinand Griffon), Anna Karina (Marianne), Dirk Sanders (Marianne's Brother), Raymond Devos (the Man), Graziella Galvani (Ferdinand's Wife), Roger Dutoit (Gangster), Hans Meyer (Gangster), Jimmy Karoubi (Dwarf), Christa Nell (Mrs Staquet), Pascal Aubier (2nd Brother), Pierre Hanin (3rd Brother), Samuel Fuller (himself), Princess Aicha Abadir (herself), Laszlo Szabo, Jean-Pierre Léaud. 110 minutes.

1965: MASCULIN-FEMININ
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Anouchka Films—Argos Films—Svensk Filmindustri—Sandrews (Production Manager: Philippe Dussart). From two stories by Guy de Maupassant. Photographed by Willy Kurant. With Jean-Pierre Léaud (Paul), Chantal Goya (Madeleine), Marlène Jobert (Elisabeth), Michel Debord (Robert), Catherine-Isabelle Duport (Catherine), Evabritt Strandberg (the Woman), Birger Malmsten (the Man), Elsa Leroy ('Mademoiselle 19 ans'), Brigitte Bardot, Antoine Bourseiller (Couple in Café), Françoise Hardy (Girl in Car). 110 minutes.

1966: Godard's company, Anouchka Films, produced *Le Père Noël A Les Yeux Bleus*, directed by Jean Eustache.

1966: MADE IN USA
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Rome-Paris Films, Anouchka Films. From an American *roman noir*. Photographed in Techniscope and colour by Raoul Coutard. Music by Schumann and Beethoven. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. With Anna Karina (Paula Nelson), Laszlo Szabo (Richard Widmark), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Donald Siegel), Yves Afonso (David Goodis), Kyoko Kosaka (Doris Mizoguchi), Marianne Faithfull (Marianne Faithfull), Claude Bakka (man with her), Ernest Menzer (Edgar Typhus), Philippe Labro (himself), Rémo Forlani (workman in bar), Marc Dudicourt (barman), Jean-Pierre Biesse (Richard Nixon), Sylvain Godet (Robert MacNamara), Alexis Poliakoff (man with red telephone), Eliane Giovagnoli (dentist's assistant), Roger Scipion (Dr Korvo), Danièle Palmero (chambermaid), Rita Maiden (Mme Céline), Isabelle Pons (provincial journalist), Philippe Pouzenc (policeman), Fernand Coquet (billposter), Miguel (dentist), Annie Guégan (girl in bandages), Marika Peroli (girl with dog), Jean-Philippe Nierman (note-taking policeman), Charles Bitsch (taxi driver), Daniel Bart (policeman), Jean-Luc Godard (Richard's tape-recorded voice). 85 minutes.

1966: DEUX OU TROIS CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D'ELLE
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Anouchka Films—Argos Films—Parc Film—Les Films de Carrosse. Production manager: Philippe Senné. Based on research by Catherine Vimonet published in *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Photographed in Techniscope and Eastmancolor by Raoul Coutard. Edited by Françoise Collin. Music by Beethoven. Narrator: Godard. With Marina Vlady (Juliette), Roger Montsoret (Robert, her husband), Anny Duperey (Marianne), Jean Narboni (Roger), Christophe Bourseiller (Christophe), Marie Bourseiller

(Solange), Raoul Lévy (John Bogus), Juliette Berto (girl in bar). 95 minutes.

1967: ANTICIPATION—*En l'An 2,000* (Episode in LE PLUS VIEUX METIER DU MONDE—*The Oldest Profession*).
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Films Gibe—Francoriz (Paris)—Rialto (Berlin). Photographed by Pierre Lhomme. With Anna Karina (Marlène), Marilù Tolo (Natasha), Jacques Charrier (Dick). Other episodes directed by Franco Indovina, Mauro Bolognini, Philippe de Broca, Michel Pfleghaar, Claude Autant-Lara.

1967: LA CHINOISE
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Anouchka Films, Les Productions de la Guéville, Athos Films, Parc Films, Simar Films. Production manager: Philippe Dussart. Photographed by Raoul Coutard in Eastmancolor. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. Music by Karl-Heinz Stockhausen. With Anne Wiazemsky (Véronique), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Guillaume), Michel Sémianko (Henri), Lex de Bruijn (Kirilov), Juliette Berto (Yvonne), Omar Diop (Comrade X), Francis Jeanson (himself).

1967: contribution to LOIN DU VIETNAM —*Far from Vietnam*. Contributing directors: Godard, Joris Ivens, William Klein, Claude Lelouch and Alain Resnais. Producers: Godard, Ivens, Klein. Lelouch, Resnais and Agnès Varda, for S.L.O.N. Supervising editor: Chris Marker with Jacqueline Meppiel. Production management: Andrea Harran. Reporters: Michèle Ray, Roger Pic, Marceline Loridan, François Maspero, Chris Marker, Jacques Sternberg, Jean Lacouture. Photographed in 16mm colour and monochrome by Willy Kurant, Jean Boffety, Kieu Tham, Denis Clairval, Alain Levent, Ghislain Cloquet, Bernard Zitzermann, Théo Robiché. Sound by Antoine Bonfanti and Harald Maury. Edited by Ragnar, Jean Ravel, Colette Leloup, Eric Pluet, Albert Jurgenson. Animation by Jean Larivière. Godard contribution with Godard and some of the actors from *La Chinoise*.

1967: L'ALLER ET RETOUR ANDATE E RITORNO DES ENFANTS PRODIGUES DEI FIGLI PRODIGHI (episode in VANGELO 70.
Written and directed by Godard. Produced by Carlo Lizzani. With Nino Castelnuovo, Christine Guého, Catherine Jourdan, Paolo Pozzesi. Other episodes directed by Carlo Lizzani, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Barnardo Bertolucci and Valerio Zurlini.

1968: WEEKEND
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Comacico, Copernic, Lira Films (Paris)—Ascot Cinéraid (Rome). Production managers: Ralph Baum, Philippe Senné. Photographed by Raoul Coutard in Eastmancolor. Edited by Agnès Guillemot. Music by Antoine Duhamel, with Mozart Piano Sonata K576 and the song 'Allo, tu m'entends' by Guy Béart. With Mireille Darc (Corinne), Jean Yanne (Roland), Jean-Pierre Kalfon (Leader of the FLSO), Valérie Lagrange (his moll), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Saint-Just/man in phone booth), Yves Beneyton (member of FLSO), Paul Gégauff (pianist), Daniel Pommereulle (Joseph Balsamo), Yves Alfonso (Gros Poncet), Blandine Jeanson (Emily Bronte/girl in farmyard), Ernest Menzer (cook), Georges Staquet (tractor driver), Juliette Berto (girl in car crash/member of FLSO), Anne Wiazemsky (girl in farmyard/member of FLSO), Virginie Vignon (Marie-Madeleine), Monsieur Jojot, Isabelle Pons. 95 minutes.

1968: LE GAI SAVOIR
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Anouchka Films (Paris), Bavaria Atelier (Munich) and, originally ORFT (Paris). Photographed by Jean Leclerc in Eastmancolor.

With Juliette Berto (Patricia Lumumba), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Emile Rousseau). 91 minutes.

1968: ONE PLUS ONE—*Sympathy for the Devil.*
Directed and written by Godard. Produced by Cupid Productions (Michael Pearson and Iain Quarrier). Executive producer: Eleni Collard. Photographed by Tony Richmond in Eastmancolor. Edited by Ken Rowles. Music by The Rolling Stones. With The Rolling Stones (Mick Jagger, Brian Jones, Keith Richard, Charles Watts, Bill Wyman), Anne Wiazemsky, Iain Quarrier, Frankie Dymon Jr., Danny Daniels, Illario Pedro, Roy Stewart, Limbert Spencer, Tommy Ansar, Michael McKay, Rudi Patterson, Mark Matthew, Karl Lewis, Bernard Boston, Niké Arrighi, Françoise Pascal, Joanna David, Monica Walters, Glenna Forster Jones, Elizabeth Long, Jeanette Wild, Harry Douglas, Colin Cunningham, Graham Peet, Matthew Knox, Barbara Coleridge. Commentary spoken by Sean Lynch. 110 minutes.

SCREENPLAYS

CHARLOTTE ET SON JULES
L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma No. 5, June 1961.

UNE HISTOIRE D'EAU
L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma No. 7, Sept. 1961.

A BOUT DE SOUFFLE
Extract in 'Jean-Luc Godard' by Jean Collet. Paris, Seghers, 1963. (Cinéma D'Aujourd'hui No. 18).
Novel adapted from film. Editions Seghers, Paris, 1960.
L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma No. 79, March 1968.

LE PETIT SOLDAT
Cahiers du Cinéma Nos. 119, 120, May, June 1961.
Le Petit Soldat: screenplay in English with an introduction by Nicholas Garnham. Lorrimer Publishing, 1967.

UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME
Extract in Collet book.

VIVRE SA VIE
L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma No. 19, Oct. 1962.
Vivre sa Vie: die Geschichte der Nana S., Drehbuch. Hamburg, Marion von Schröder, 1964. (Cinemathek No. 9). Script in German.

LES CARABINIERS
Filmcritica No. 150, Oct. 1964. Extract in Italian.

LE GRAND ESCROC
L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma No. 46, March 1965.

LE MEPRIS
Filmcritica No. 139-140. Nov.-Dec. 1964. Dialogue in Italian. Extract in Collet book.

BANDE A PART
Film (West Germany) No. 2, Feb. 1965.
Filmcritica No. 150, Oct. 1964. Extract in Italian.

UNE FEMME MARIEE
L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma No. 46, March 1965.
Eine verheiratete Frau: Protokoll. Hamburg, Marion von Schröder, 1966. (Cinemathek No. 15). Script in German.
The Married Woman: a Jean-Luc Godard film. Text based on English sub-titles by Ursule Molinaro, with an essay by Tom Milne. Berkley Publishing Corporation (Berkley Medallion Books), 1965.

ALPHAVILLE
Alphaville. English translation and screenplay by Peter Whitehead. Lorrimer Films, 1966.
Filmcritica No. 145–160, Aug.–Sept. 1965 (in Italian).

MASCULIN-FEMININ
Masculin-Féminin. Edited by Robert Hughes. New York, Grove Press, 1968.

MADE IN USA
Made in USA: screenplay with an introduction by Michael Kustow. Lorrimer Publishing, 1967.

DEUX OU TROIS CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D'ELLE
L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma No. 70, May 1967.

LA CHINOISE
Filmcritica No. 182, October 1967. Text in French.

LOIN DU VIETNAM
Peace News, 5th January 1968. Text of Godard's contribution.

LE GAI SAVOIR
Cahiers du Cinéma Nos. 200/201, April/May 1968.
Extracts from the soundtrack.

INTERVIEWS

L'Express (28 Dec. 1959): Interview with Michèle Manceaux; Les Débuts de Jean-Luc Godard.
Le Monde (17 March 1960) 'Mon Film est un documentaire sur Jean Seberg et Jean-Paul Belmondo'.
L'Express (10 June 1960): Interview with Michèle Manceaux (on *Le Petit Soldat*).
Radio-Cinéma No. 459: Interview with Jean Collet (on *Le Petit Soldat*).
Le Monde (13 Sept. 1960): Interview with Yvonne Baby: A propos du *Petit Soldat*.
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